A THRILLING STORY OF THE GREAT WEST IN NEXT ISSUE OF THE LEDGER

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THE WEDDING DRESS TORCH

By Alvah Milton Kerr.

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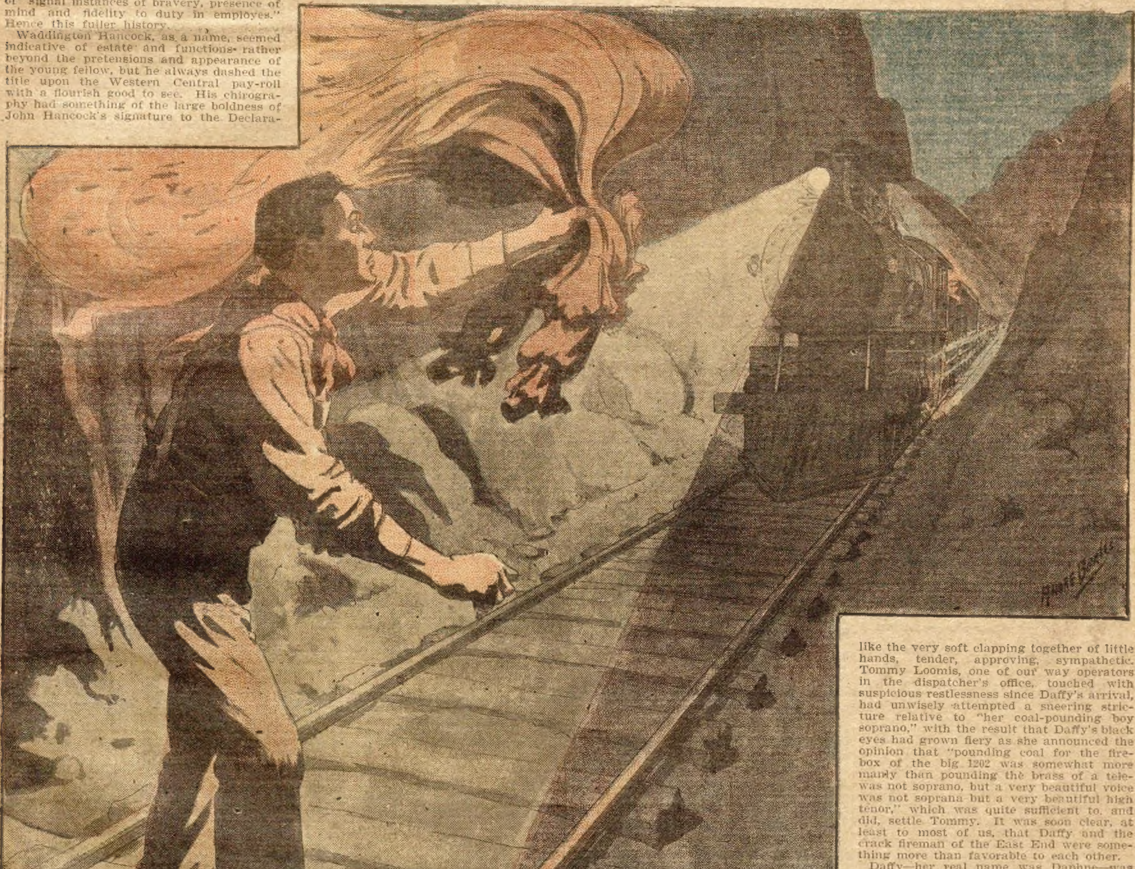
How he achieved the thing is, of course, a matter of record. Burke's private journal of heroic feats on the Western Central contains an account of it, entered by the superintendent himself in plain black and white. But the "why" of it is scarcely indicated in Burke's chronicle, matters of the heart not being likely to figure conspicuously in a railroad superintendent's record of "signal instances of bravery, presence of mind and fidelity to duty in employes." Hence this fuller history.

Waddington Hancock, as a name, seemed indicative of estate and functions rather beyond the pretensions and appearance of the young fellow, but he always dashed the title upon the Western Central pay-roll with a flourish good to see. His chirography had something of the large boldness of John Hancock's signature to the Declaration of Independence. It presented the same scorn of space, together with a carelessness of position and direction and a bounding swoop of line and curve that even the famous Declarer's signature could not boast. It was also commonly emphasized on the pale blue sheet by thumb and finger marks eloquent of coal and smutted waste, for a locomotive fireman does not usually wash his hands before jumping out of the gangway to scramble into the pay-car after his "dough." The roll-clerk invariably squirmed with appreciation of the length and breadth of the space that was being occupied as he watched the construction of the signature, but Martin Bonner, paymaster, who himself always handed the checks across the tiny counter of the Gazelle, usually laughed and rubbed his florid bald head and winked. The young man's signature was, somehow, singularly consonant with his physical aspect. He had long feet, long, well-shaped hands, a straight steel-post sort of body, a backward springing spine and a round, yellowish, handsome head. His eyes were not large but disturbingly direct and of a laughing, gleaming blue. With his quick, bold, erect air he had a soft, musical voice and usually was sparing of words. Once, anent a quip of Bonner's relative to his soft voice, the young fellow winked and said:



"Do I write loud enough?"

"Loud!" laughed Bonner; "your writing is simply thunder!"

The fireman winked again peculiarly, and, taking his check, went out of the pay-car.

One thing, Wadd liked to sing. That was his weakness, or his strength, as one pleased to view it. Wadd's path homeward did not naturally lie by way of the residence of Master Mechanic Addicks, but with the advent of Daffy Tuttle, his niece, a subtle influence seemed always to persuade his feet to make the little journey by that particular street, and it was noticeable that his vocal performance invariably reached its climax in the immediate region of the Addicks home. Wadd being engaged in firing passenger on the East End—that is, from Paley Fork to Denver and return—the schedule put him down at the Fork near midnight, with the result that the M. M., being awakened by the youth's soaring tenor, had frequent occasion to shift his iron-gray head upon his pillow and profane the darkness with protesting vocables. But always there was something of a wholly different sort exuding from one of the gable windows, something that sounded like the very soft clapping together of little hands, tender, approving, sympathetic. Tommy Loomis, one of our way operators in the dispatcher's office, touched with suspicious restlessness since Daffy's arrival, had unwisely attempted a sneering stricture relative to "her coal-pounding boy soprano," with the result that Daffy's black eyes had grown fiery as she announced the opinion that "pounding coal for the firebox of the big 1202 was somewhat more manly than pounding the brass of a tele- was not soprano, but a very beautiful voice was not soprana but a very beautiful high tenor," which was quite sufficient to, and did, settle Tommy. It was soon clear, at least to most of us, that Daffy and the crack fireman of the East End were something more than favorable to each other.

Daffy—her real name was Daphne—was from up Cheyenne way. Jack Tuttle, her father, was for long an engineer on the U. P. He was pulling the Fast Mail when he was killed. That occurred in the wreck occasioned by the Blue Run flood. Addicks was also from the U. P. Therefore Daffy, though the expression itself rings odd, was distinctly of railroad stock. From childhood she had been acquainted with locomotives and locomotive folk. Throttles, cylinder saddles, balanced valves, exhaust ports, eccentrics, check valves, injectors, air drums, rockers, spring hangers, reverse levers, and the like were well-nigh as familiar to her as pins and needles. She had seen engines made, or, rather, what was fully as enlightening, she had many times seen all the parts of locomotives, disassociated, repaired and reassembled. She had played in roundhouses and car shops as a child, had held the throttle of her father's engine many times in tomboy days, and still liked better than food to hang out of a cab window and feel the steel fabric roll and plunge as she watched the drivers dissolve into whirling cobwebs beneath her.

Still, Daffy was girlish and pretty—outrageously pretty, some women secretly thought—and she could "trim" hats and play the piano. Old Addicks had been heard to growl that he had not been able to make out which was the more likely to induce lockjaw, Daffy's playing or Wadd's singing. However, the M. M. was proverbially ungracious to lovers.

The M. M. was a widower (grass) and was acid of speech and porcupine of posture touching things matrimonial. His experience of love and marriage had apparently left a deposit of conclusions in his mind similar in irritating quality to pounded glass in the blood. Nevertheless, he was a just man, or, at least, aimed to be.

As for Daffy, small as she was, she was a thing of magnitude in the affairs of Paley Fork, and admittedly Paley Fork was blessed with numerous maids and matrons, and was the abiding place of men who measurably quickened or restricted the functioning of human life throughout a good many leagues both east and west. There was something peculiarly piquant about the girl. She had a fashion of glancing around quickly, of airily tipping her head and body about, of posing a moment to fling out a word or note of laughter and hurry away, that suggested a little brown wren, bright-eyed, jaunty, deliciously impudent. When, on her way to the post-office or the milliner's, she came down the long platform of the station, gowned in white pique, small French heels tapping on hot planks and black eyes glancing from under a red parasol that looked like a big, lacy, flopping poppy, then something magnetic and unexplainable swept through the division offices. At any rate, in such moments apparently half our number felt it necessary to seek the windows in search of expected trains, fresh air, or to look for some one out in the yards.

Over in the great roundhouse, too, when Daffy came down, as she often did, clad in a golf suit, with a jockey cap skewered to a top-knot of tomboy curls, and climbed into some outgoing engine, to return by the first engine met with out on the line, there was a swift and nervous adjustment by the men of coat collars, a straightening of mustaches, an all-around attempt to look pretty that was pitiably male. Truly, it looked difficult for Wadd.

Though several members of the force were "languishing" at Daffy, the stiffest obstruction impeding the flow of Wadd's inclination was probably Addicks' antipathy. Obviously the fireman was very much in the master mechanic's power; besides, Daffy, being without living parents and committed to her uncle's keeping, was hardly as free as the proverbial bird in the matter of mating. The M. M. mentally admitted that there were few men on the Western Central who could keep so high and even a pressure of steam in an engine boiler under all conditions as could young Hancock, but he did hate a man who sang high tenor and who was in love. Such a person must perforce be contemptibly weak. The M. M. himself possessed a voice like a bass drum with loose nails in it; he was deep-chested, big-headed, grizzly; as for love—was he not a widower, and "sour grass" at that?

But back of his personal prejudice, and sinking deeper roots in his mind, was a notion that, at heart, Fireman Hancock was a coward and a quitter. A story that was not at all pretty had come up to us from the K. P., where Wadd began firing, to the effect that the young man once jumped when he ought to have stuck; that his desertion of an engine in a certain crisis had cost human lives. Tommy Loomis brought the story.

Sifted, the main facts seemed as follows: Engine 999, Lyon engineer, Hancock fireman, pulling a K. P. express, oddly collided head on with the Fast Mail near a station named Peter Bend. The express had orders to hold at Peter Bend for the mail, but went by the station very fast, striking the mail disastrously a quarter of a mile beyond the station. Lyon, dead, was found close to the station. Hancock was found just beyond the station creeping about in an open lot in an apparent dazed condition. He had jumped, he afterward stated, when the engines were not more than a hundred feet apart, and had fancied that he was crawling back to warn a train that he thought was following. He stated, also, that just when Lyon was about to shut off steam for Peter Bend the driving-rod on the right-hand side snapped, knocking off the side of the side of the cab and killing Lyon instantly; that both the reverse apparatus and throttle lever were smashed and could not be operated; that he had tried his best to reverse and shut off, but found it impossible; that he had clung to the engine until death breathed in his face, then he had jumped. Just how he had got back nearly a quarter of a mile and into the open lot he did not clearly know.

From certain viewpoints Wadd's explanation of his personal conduct in the affair looked fishy. There were people who believed that he had not attempted to avert the wreck, but had quit the engine in panic immediately after the breaking of the driving-rod, else he would not have been found so near the station. Lyon's engine had been fearfully shattered in the collision and fell upon her right side, crushing her levers; therefore Wadd's statement could neither be verified nor disproved. The K. P. people had been willing to continue him in their employ, but Wadd, not relishing expressions of doubt and hints that probably his cowardice had occasioned loss of life, quit in wrathful disgust, and presently came to the Western Central. The odd thing is that history should have so nearly repeated itself for Wadd, that the Puma Point tragedy afterward set him in a theater of action so closely paralleling the K. P. affair. We all wondered at that.

One morning in February the M. M. sent for Wadd. The youth had been visiting Daffy twice each week and indulging nocturnal carolings along her street through several months. He was fully aware that he had rivals, but was beginning to feel sure of his place in her esteem. He was not nearly so sure of his place on the Western Central. As he walked down to the roundhouse he wondered if Addicks had not concluded to push him from his position. It certainly looked an easy solution of the Daffy problem.

Arriving at the roundhouse, the M. M. led Wadd to the 1202, and there angrily took him to task touching the condition of the engine's crown-sheet. Wadd made a brief examination and explained, showing the master mechanic how, owing to a warp occasioned by the furnace coming in contact with snow, the dampers acted defectively during the run ended the night before. Obviously, the fault did not lie with the fireman; at least, it had not lain within his power to escape the risk that had been taken. Addicks saw this, but was the more enraged. He had hoped that Wadd could not explain.

"Oh, well," he said, impatiently slamming a wrench into a tool box, "you are an excuse-maker, anyway. You always manage to creep 'round things."

Wadd's eyes blazed against the older man's face through a second or two. "On the contrary, Mr. Addicks, I never creep around anything, and I shall not creep around you." He spoke steadily but with rising voice.

"Don't brag," rasped Addicks. When angry his voice was as soothing as the sound of a saw ripping into iron. "You explained about the K. P. wreck, I understand, but I don't believe the stuff you told about it, not a word of it. You crept 'round the truth, in my opinion, and what's more, I believe you were a coward then and still have the streak in you." At heart he was railing about Wadd and Daffy.

"What makes you think me a liar and a coward?" asked Wadd with a smile, though his nostrils were growing thin and spotted.

"Because no man with a straw-colored hair and a tenor voice could be anything else," said Addicks brutally.

The fireman's entire face went greenish-white. He walked close up to the master mechanic and looked him in the eyes for a moment, then suddenly Addicks felt himself literally lifted by the throat and hurled headlong into one of the roundhouse ash-pits. When he had scrambled out, and had secured a crank-pin with which to brain this extraordinary creature, Wadd was walking out of the big door, erect as a ramrod and reeking contempt from every pore. The next morning he entered the office of the master mechanic and said:

"Well, have you my time made out?"

"I never discharge employes for personal reasons," rasped Addicks. "When you've injured the company you'll get your time quick enough. Continue your present run."

Wadd softened. "Mr. Addicks," he began, "I feel like I had been too hasty. I would like to——"

"Nothing of the kind. Drop it," snapped the old man. "I'll send for you when I want you. Good morning."

When, a few minutes later, Wadd came by the water-tank on his way home, he leaned against an upright of the tank and strangled, ending his laugh with a gasping howl.

But Addicks did not erase himself by any means; he notified Wadd in writing to keep away from the house and his niece. He hotly took Daffy to task, but Daffy only twinkled her black eyes and kissed him, and said that of course Mr. Hancock should come to the house when he liked. Addicks ordered her to pack her things and go back to Cheyenne and remain with her Aunt Sue, Addicks' sister, but Daffy never budged. She laughingly assured him that she knew precisely what he needed, and that was for some one of exactly her age and particular style of beauty to play the piano and assist the housekeeper to spend his money; so she remained.

In the headquarters building we chuckled; truth, for once, was almost as attractive as fiction. Superintendent Burke told the master mechanic to discharge Wadd at once. The idea! Such insubordination could not be countenanced for an instant. Addicks refused point-blank. Burke said he would himself discharge the fireman. Addicks said if he did he would have to discharge him also. Truth was leaving fiction far to the rear! Addicks said the affair was a personal; he had called the young man a coward; the fireman had not responded exactly like one. The M. M. would like well enough to get rid of him, but not in that way. Burke washed his hands of the affair.

Though Daffy had said that, of course, Wadd should come to see her whenever he chose, the fireman refused to put his foot across Addicks' threshold. When Daffy met him and urged him to call he laughingly dissented.

"It wouldn't be right, hardly decent, it seems to me," he said. "The gov'nor's word goes when it comes to his own house. He don't need to get out a Government injunction. He owns his home, but he doesn't own you, little girl; that's diamonds of a different water, you know."

Daffy suggested that she might meet him once a week at the home of a common friend. Wadd shook his head. "That's sneaky," he said; "I don't like it. If you happen to be down at the foot of North avenue occasionally when I get in from my run I'll walk home with you. I'd like that. Seems to me when it comes to the streets we have certain inalienable rights without straining the Constitution, even of Colorado. Then there's the stars and the moon and the mountains, and Jackson's livery stable with lots of buggies in it, besides, you might come down now and then and take a ride on the 1202. You can hold the glim while I break coal, and maybe Pap will let you squeeze the choker." They both fell to laughing. Daffy set her right foot forward, thrust her right arm straight up in the air and struck a goddess-of-liberty pose.

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"By the divine right vested in the natural constitution of every fair maiden I here declare—" She stopped.

"Declare what?" asked Wadd.

She twinkled her eyes at him. "That maybe I will."

The winter wore on and the weeks drew into March. Day by day a moist freshness breathed across the mountains. The peaks pushed back their silver hoods, shook out yellow locks of sunshine, and smiled. The canyons echoed with the cymbal-shock of swollen streams, valleys grew green as ocean hollows, miners went reluctantly into the workings, railroad men wished they were farmers, and Wadd Hancock, with enlarging heart-hunger, wanted Daffy

Singing along the "ole man's" street one night as he returned from his run, the girl fluttered out to him from Addicks' gate, and the pair walked up North avenue until they were on the base of Sacket Mountain. A vague, whitish world spread about and below them in the moonlight. They sat down on a shelf of stone beside the road and for a time were silent.

"I wonder when something will happen—sometimes that will change Uncle Stephen," said Daffy.

Wadd laid his cap on the ground and pushed back his hair. "When it does happen I expect I'll get fired," he said.

The girl sat silently looking at the filmy mountain range across the valley. Her dark eyes glistened. "When it happens you'll get an engine; I've been concentrating," she said.

He laughed and arose and stepped into the road. He picked up a stone and threw it far down the slope. When the stone had fallen and was silent he turned back to her. "Well, we've been hitting high joints and grades most of the way so far," he said. "With the M. M. flagging and trying to turn switches on us, and the gang generally piling ties on the track, it don't look like it could be any worse running if we coupled up and went double-header. What do you say, little girl?"

The wine in Daffy's cheeks deepened its rose. "You mustn't get impatient or discouraged, big boy," she laughed. "Remember that all things come to him who waits."

"That is exactly the trouble," declared Wadd, "all things do come. If only some things came to him who waited there would be more sense in the scheme. But all things come—trouble and hot boxes and open switches generally—so I prefer not to wait."

Daffy put her hands in his and looked up at him. "You are a good fireman, you've got my heart very warm," she laughed, adopting his fashion of metaphor; "but do you think we ought to pull out without the consent of the master mechanic?"

"Run-on orders if you can. If you can't get orders go ahead on your time-card rights; that is my doctrine," laughed Wadd. He saw stars swimming in her upturned eyes; his face grew grave and tender.

Daffy drew him down and took his face between her hands and looked into his eyes long and soberly. Tremblingly she touched her lips to his. "Dear," she whispered, "you have the signal to go ahead."

This explains why Daffy temporarily abjured the piano for the needle, why she wrote to Aunt Sue at Cheyenne, and why Aunt Sue sent her two hundred dollars. It also explains why she deadheaded over to Denver and ordered from a modiste the historic crepe de chine and lace wedding gown that played so important a part in the Puma Point tragedy. Daffy visited Denver a second time to have the gown fitted, then, when it would have received the last stitch, Wadd was to bring the beautiful and precious "creation" home to Paley Fork. Very naturally Daffy desired that her marriage vows should be solemnized in Stephen Addicks' best parlor and with proper eclat. Wadd also would have liked that, but after one had thrown the owner of the house into an ash-pit and brought him a very appreciable measure of derision, one could hardly expect to harvest a comforting crop of consideration.

"Never mind," said Wadd to Daffy, "we can be married over at the parsonage, or, if the preacher's 'best' isn't big enough to hold our friends, we can hire a hall. I've got some joyous rags being tied together over at Bunker's tog factory. They'll be done in a few days, and when that dazzling affair of yours gets in from Denver, we'll be ready to meet all comers. I've rented the Cupple cottage, but I guess we'd better not buy the furniture until after this matrimonial sunburst has been flashed on your uncle. I may have to go hunting a job, you know."

Daffy believed that she could win her uncle's consent, and was daily noting his moods, awaiting the psychic moment when he should seem least resistant. One evening she dropped a hint. Like magic powder, it produced a smoke of sulphuric rhetoric. Daffy waited.

On the sixth day of April Wadd found that the bridal dress was ready for transit. Trainmen on the West End as well as several on the East End remember the day. Away out in Bear Paw canyon there was a bad slide and a wreck; and Puma Point! that would be hard to forget. Wadd brought the gown from the modiste in a green pasteboard box. The package was too large to go into the seat-box on the fireman's side of the 1202, so he placed it on the front end of the seat in the window-niche, tying it fast with twine and weighting it down with the iron head of a coal maul. To Wadd the box had a quality of life, speeding a thrill of pleasure along his nerve each time that he looked at it. Big, gray, corpulent Pap Gundy, the engineer, glanced at the box as he climbed into the cab and stood for a moment with his hand pressed against his heart, laboring for breath.

"More duds, eh?" he panted.

"Yep, more duds," replied Wadd, glancing at the gauges.

The old engineer put his foot on the step and ran his eye across the tremulous gauge-needles. "Son, I don't feel a bit good," he said. "Do you know, I believe that a hair about two foot long has grown inward from my chest and wrapped itself around my heart, and it's tightening up little by little every day. Going t' stop th

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pump one of these days, I'm afraid." He shook with slow laughter.

Wadd laid his hand lightly on the old man's shoulder. "You're joshing, Pap. You're the healthiest-looking man I know; it's sure all right," he said.

"Of course, son, of course; but it feels like a strangling hair." He slowly climbed to his seat on the right-hand shoulder of the mighty machine. From the fuel-deck Wadd could see no more of him than the outline of his back and right shoulder.

Exactly on time the great compound, with a quickening series of crashing exhausts, moved out of the shed with her string of coaches and made off toward the mountains through the falling dusk. She went purring, but with a hoarse depth of breath befitting her monstrous lungs; she rolled on her springs, but majestically and in keeping with the staying power of her two hundred thousand pounds of close-knit steel. She obeyed the throttle like a lamb, but her hunger for coal! Wadd was never at rest a moment. His hand seemed always reaching for the door-chain, and coal seemed forever spraying from his shovel into the hot mouth that ceaselessly growled and hissed with appetite. Following level rails southwestward through the first hour, she whipped the coaches along like a string of toys, but the lift of the foot-hills forced her to heavy breathing. Wadd tore open his shirt collar and rolled his sleeves to his elbows. It took a real master of the maul and shovel to keep breath in that prodigious chest.

By nine o'clock they were at Barn Butte, a sort of assistant division station at the eastern base of the Cradle Range. There Jim Downey with the 1300, a huge decapod, hooked in as pusher and helped them to the summit. By eleven o'clock, having left Downey behind, the 1202 was bellowing on the western slope of the range, her steel skull lowered toward the Sandrill. Though the air of this soaring region was chill, Pap Gundy sat among his levers hatless and in his shirt sleeves and with both windows wide. For the most part he sat poring on the two streaks of steel that spun toward him through the broad glare of the headlight, but at times the bright rails seemed to him only thin wires running through air and sinking under the weight of the engine. In such moments he would look away quickly to the stars and straighten up with a deep breath and shake himself. Taking a train filled with humanity down the grades of the Cradle Range was hardly a feat admitting of vertigo or dreams.

With Wadd matters were now easier. Occasionally he jumped upon the fireman's seat, and with his hand resting on the precious box also looked at the stars. Everywhere the mountain tops seemed caught and swaying in a silvery net. There was no visible moon; on the mountains rested a vast silence through which the 1202 crashed heavily, falling toward the valley twenty miles away. At Bonebreak, half-way down the range, Bunch Wilson, who was at the train-sheet in Paley Fork, caught them and gave them an order to meet eastbound passenger No. 2 at Puma Point Siding, nine miles west of Bridge Station, the regular meeting point. Bridge Station was on the Sandrill River at the base of the range. Crossing the stream there, the track followed the river up the canyon, past Queen Cove Mine and Puma Point Siding, and wound westward over the base of Silver Mountain toward Paley Fork.

Leaving the Fork that night, Number 2 was twenty-six minutes late, and had to be helped to the siding with an order. In the coaches Bob French was handling tickets, in the cab Sandy McBinn was at the throttle, and with him was Stephen Addicks, watching the working of a hoped-for improvement he had contrived in the grate-shaking apparatus. The M. M. was in a mood malefic. The shaker had not performed satisfactorily, and the fireman, in attempting to force it to effective service, had jammed his right hand cruelly. He could do but little, and since the train was already behind time, McBinn descended to the fuel-deck and wielded the shovel while Addicks took the valve levers. Driving an engine was as familiar to the M. M. as waste and overalls, and he brought Number 2 down the line at a clip that made the coaches rock and squeak on the curves.

"Guess Sandy must be trying t' show the old man what he can do," French remarked to one of the brakemen. "Hope he don't slue us into the canyon when we come down around Puma Point."

"Well, if th' ole man stands for it s'pose we'll have to."

They did not know that the master mechanic's hand was on the throat-lever, nor did Addicks, with his steel-gray eyes set steadily on the forward point of the wedge of light swiftly splitting the gloom ahead, know that he was whirling Number 2 toward an oncoming train with a dead man at the throttle. Addicks proposed to take Number 2 into Denver on time.

And Gundy—no one on the express knew! He brought his train down the range to the Sandrill and across to Bridge Station in good order, though a trifle fast. He shut off a little late at Bridge Station and ran past, stopping at the water-tank instead of the station, which was queer. When they pulled out he gave the 1202 her head so suddenly that persons on the train who chanced to be standing were jerked nearly off their feet. That was the last time Pap opened a valve. His broad left hand remained on the lever, gripped into a hard, hairy knot, his right clutched the window-sill like a vise, and he lurched forward with his chin on his chest, staring at his feet and swaying a little, death's frost in his eyes.

Wadd was busy. From Bridge Station to the Fork the 1202 would eat coal like an ore-crusher. She went up the dark canyon along the Sandrill with her exhausts beating a steady roar. Where was the use of Pap making a run for Silver Mountain, Wadd asked himself, when they had to stop at the siding? He glanced at the outline of the engineer's back and wondered. Yet surely the old man knew his business.

They swept by the vast gash in the mountain's base where lay Queen Cove Mine, and onward through cuts and over fills, the coaches rolling in the wake of the rushing machine. The hoarse buzz in the engine's throat deepened as she turned slightly from the river and began to plant her whirling feet on the base of Silver Mountain, and Wadd, pounding coal under her busily, his brain aswim with Daffy and the sumptuous gown and the portents of the morrow, gave small heed to his whereabouts until, with a shock of realization that nipped his hair-roots with cold, he saw that they had rushed by the siding and were rounding Puma Point. Instantly he leaped into the gangway, and swinging outward by the hand-rods, threw a quick glance back. The siding was surely vanishing eastward! At that the conductor's bell-cord wrenched sharply, giving the stop signal. With a gasp of horror Wadd sprang across the fuel-deck and up the steps to Gundy's seat. He snatched the engineer roughly about the shoulders.

"Pap! What do you mean? What are you trying to do?"

The gray head rolled back against the fireman's shoulder, the unseeing, frosty eyes close to the young man's face.

For a moment the fireman stared down upon the unearthly countenance, his faculties frozen by what he saw, then he lunged at the throttle. The dead man's hand seemed shrunk upon the lever like a claw of chilled iron. The youth laid hold of it and wrenched it away, then his hand flew back to the lever to shut off steam. But in that instant, as if stretching forth his hand conjured destruction, the 1202 crashed and leaped and seemingly rent herself into fragments. Wadd felt himself strike the fuel-deck, fire gushed from his eyes, he felt one of his legs snap, and somehow realized that boulders and mud and logs were hurling over him. The next moment, as it might be, he felt himself thrashed upon the earth. The green box lay crushed beneath his breast; things, he knew not what, were piled upon him. He felt flattened, pinioned, smothering; he must have air or perish. With a heave and wrench that seemed fit to tear the muscles from his bones he got his head above the ruck of stuff and drew himself out. He reached in and pulled the crushed box after him. Even in that moment of bewilderment something within him asked what Daffy would think should he lose the wedding gown. They were in an earthslide that had rolled down from Puma Point. The 1202 had driven almost through it, and now lay upon her back with her drivers in the air. The train, stretched in the mucky stuff, twisted and toppled grotesquely; the coaches rang with human cries. The Pintsch lights were burning in some of the coaches, perhaps the red lamps were aglow at the rear; but evidently the conductor and brakemen were struggling somewhere in the half-buried wreck.

Something, a kind of lightning, blazed through the fireman's brain: In three or four minutes Number 2, an inconceivable weight of iron and wood and humanity, would rush down Puma Grade and drive into the helpless mass in the cut. He seemed suddenly baptized in fire. He threw a glance about him; there was no lantern or means of signaling at hand. Like a swimmer who blows back engulfing waters with long breaths and fights toward some point whereon life waits but a moment beckoning, he began crawling madly ahead along the track, dragging the torn box and his dangling leg after him. If he could but reach the western end of the first bend, some three or four hundred feet distant! Beyond that there was a little stretch of straight track, and, could he set the wedding gown on fire, McBinn might possibly see the signal in time to get his train under control before he struck the hapless coaches in the cut.

He went like an insane man. Back of him there was yelling and a turmoil of noise; away in front of him a mighty, jostling thing was roaring down the grade; but he heard nothing, only his breath gasping and pulses pounding and the bones of his broken leg rasping. The pasteboard box went entirely to pieces; he flung the lacy gown back over his shoulders and scrambled onward over the ties. Though it seemed a monstrous stretch of years, in three minutes he was at the end of the curve. He looked up and saw the headlight of Number 2 half a mile away; he glanced back at the wrecked express; it seemed fearfully near. But he could do no better. With trembling hand he tore some matches from the "pipe" pocket of his flannel shirt and raked a bunch of them along one of the rails. He drew the beautiful gown before him and thrust the blazing matches among the lace. Flames leaped up as from ignited corn-silk; the gauzy fabric began to writhe and flash. Seizing it in both hands he rose on the knee of his uninjured leg and waved it wildly to and fro above his head. The flames of it burned him, the curling laces trickled down upon him like melting lead, but he felt nothing, heard nothing, only lashed the blazing gown back and forth, yelling with all his lungs.

Piled against the western stars, the mountain masses seemed to sway, the headlight of the oncoming train rocked and dipped fantastically, then to the young fellow on the track it began to whirl in vast circles like a stupendous coal of fire, then, as with a wink, it snapped back and all was darkness. In his brain for an instant wavered a dying impulse, a feeling that he was still on his knees flinging the flaming robe back and forth above his head, but in truth he was lying flat across the right-hand rail with his face between the ends of the ties and his scorched fingers clutching the dirt.

On passenger Number 2 fright and commotion had fallen; down in the gloom the iron way had suddenly spouted waving flames. The fire was white—but look at its motion! The engine's chime shrieked once like a bursting trumpet, the reversing lever went over with a crash, air leaped through the pipes, and the brake-shoes jammed their gritty soles against the flying wheels until the rails flickered with spattering fire, passengers smote the seats in front of them with face or breast, drawheads battered and split, and from end to end the train surged and snarled and shook. Addicks, thrown forward upon his knees, stared ahead with his grizzly face suddenly white as chalk, McBinn leaped into the gangway ready to jump, the fireman forgot his mangled hand and lowered himself to the step, poising to spring. All seemed accomplished in a moment, almost in a breath. The train, skating in fire, quivered and jostled down toward the sputtering wedding gown and the limp form sprawling across the track. It approached close, almost touched them, then, with a tremor and backward heave of the whole fabric, the train stopped and fell quiet.

McBinn, lantern in hand, was the first man to reach the muffled, muddy figure, but the master mechanic was at McBinn's heels and his arms were the first to encircle the prone shape. He turned the young fellow's face to the light; it was streaked with blood and smeared with wet earth. Addicks was strangely moved. A brakeman and a postal clerk from the express came up, panting and trying to talk.

"What's happened?" growled Addicks.

"We're in a slide. Lot of folks bruised and hurt, I guess; don't think anybody's killed," said the brakeman.

"I stumbled over Pap Gundy by the engine. I'm afraid Pap—he didn't look right," said the postal clerk. The speaker looked pallid in the glare of the headlight.

Addicks was tenderly wiping Wadd's face with his handkerchief. Suddenly the eyes in the soiled face opened, widened wildly; the figure began to twist and struggle.

"Stop her! Hold Number Two!" the muddy lips cried.

"Shut her off, McBinn! Plug her! Throw her over—throw her over! Give her——"

"There—there!" said Addicks, stroking the young fellow's hair back from his forehead; "Number Two is all right. McBinn is here. I was at the throttle myself and got your signal. Number Two is right here on the track."

Wadd looked around at the men oddly, up at the front of Number 2's engine, then sank back limply and began to laugh. "Ho-o-rah!" he said weakly, "pick the hymn and I'll sing the tenor part! Say, be careful, one of my legs is busted, I guess. Touch her lightly, please. Say, I had to burn Daffy's dress; couldn't help it. She simply won't do a thing to me!" The young fellow set his jaws rigidly as the men began to lift him.

"Dress—Daffy's dress!" said Addicks. "Where did you get—what do you mean, boy?"

"Weddin' gown," muttered Wadd through his teeth.

"You set it on fire?"

"Burned her up," grated Wadd.

The master mechanic was silent a moment.

"I see," he said. "Well, I'll buy her the next one myself. Another thing, son, when the 1202 has been put through the shop you can have her."

"The engine or the girl?"

"Both."

This thrilling story is reproduced here by permission of the publishers of a book of most remarkable railroad stories entitled "The Diamond Key, and the Railroad Heroes Who Won It." The stories are largely founded on fact, and recount many thrilling and extraordinary acts of heroism by telegraph operators and train dispatchers and trainmen. The book was written by an ex-train dispatcher, and contains much valuable information as well as thrilling adventure. It is beautifully bound and illustrated and contains nearly 400 pages. If you wish to give a book to any one as a birthday present or otherwise, or want yourself to be wonderfully entertained, we advise you to send for it. Its price is $1.25. Address Lee & Shepard, 93 Federal street, Boston, Mass.

Figures Too High.

It was a little out-of-the-way church the first Sunday in May, just after the "footwashing" had been observed, which is a custom followed by that particular religious sect of people, that the preacher announced that the congregation would join in singing hymn No. 23, "My soul, be on thy guard; ten thousand foes," etc.

Jones, a red-faced, broad-shouldered giant, tried to put on a lot of energy and sing tenor, for this was a special occasion, and he seemed to be the whole church, since he was musical director, and the only choir they had, as well as janitor and deacon; in fact, he did everything but preach. Jones rose up, and in stentorian tones began to sing in a pitch too high. When he got to the second line ("ten thousand foes," etc.) it was necessary for his voice to rise beyond his capacity, and he broke down. The congregation began to titter, and a brother in the front row said:

"'Pears to me like you're a leetle bit too high."

An old gentleman in his shirtsleeves over in the amen corner rose up with a judicial air and bawled out:

"S'pose we just try five thousand."

Heroic Treatment.

"Her voice should be cultivated."
"It should be amputated."

AFTERWARD.

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

Oh, to think that the world will go on
 After we are dead!
Lovers will go on loving,
 The old, old words will be said.

New buds will bloom in April,
 And white be the apple bough;
June will return, the birds troop back,
 The earth be as glad as now.

The long green pageant of summer
 Will march its accustomed way,
And year after year the autumn pomp
 Will crimson the pallid day.

Lovers will go on loving,
 The words that we said will be said,
When you and I are forgotten,
 When you and I are dead!

MONEY CHEERFULLY REFUNDED.

"You say in your advertisements," said the man who had laid a package on the counter of a dry goods store, "that you 'guarantee satisfaction or money cheerfully refunded.'"

"What's the matter?" asked the head of the department, as a frown overspread his face.

"Come, now, you're not looking a bit cheerful. I bought a shirt here the day before yesterday, and I find that it is not satisfactory. I was told——"

"You will have to see the man who sold you the shirt."

"Will he refund the money?"

"If he wishes to do so, he can."

"Ah, over there he is. Here, my friend, do you remember selling me this shirt the day before yesterday. You told me it was——"

"I don't think I sold you the shirt. I never saw you before."

"Yes, you did. You sold me this shirt, and guaranteed that it——"

"No, you are mistaken. I never guarantee anything."

"You don't, eh? Well, your advertisements state that you guarantee satisfaction or money cheerfully refunded. Here. Look at this paper. This is your ad, isn't it?"

"This is today's paper. It hasn't anything to do with the day before yesterday."

"Where's the proprietor of this place?"

"You'll find him in the office."

After he had waited about for nearly an hour, the man with the shirt succeeded in intercepting the proprietor as he was trying to slip out to luncheon.

"You advertise that the money is cheerfully returned when the goods you sell are not satisfactory."

"I must ask you to talk to the man you bought the goods from. I don't know anything about this matter."

"I have talked to the salesman, and he says you are the only one who cheerfully returns the money. This shirt——"

"You will have to excuse me. I'm in a hurry. Go to the head of the department."

"I'm in a hurry, too. I've wasted a lot of valuable time here now, and I want to get this matter straightened out. The head of the department says he doesn't do the guaranteeing, and can't, therefore, cheerfully refund. The head of the department looked unhappy when I asked him if he would cheerfully refund, and now I find that you are not inclined to be cheerful when I ask you to return my money."

"You are insulting, sir. I don't wish to have any further argument with you. Mr. Walker, will you please step this way? Did you sell this man a shirt"

"I don't remember him at all."

"Here," said the man who wanted his money cheerfully refunded, as he tore the wrapper from the shirt, "you can see that this came from your stock, can't you?"

"Well, what is the matter with it?" asked the proprietor.

"It isn't satisfactory, that's all. You advertise that you cheerfully refund money when goods are not satisfactory. Why should it be necessary to have all this argument? The shirt is not satisfactory. I want my money back. Now, will you cheerfully return it?"

"Take this order to the cashier," said the proprietor, as he permitted a look of disgust that was not unmixed with anger to overspread his countenance, "and your ninety-eight cents will be returned to you."

"But are you cheerful? I don't want the money unless you can be cheerful when you return it. I could wear the shirt, if necessary, you know Still, I thought that if it would make you cheerful to return the money because the goods you sold me did not give satisfaction, I ought to——"

"Oh, fudge! Are you crazy?"

"No; I am an altruist. I believe in spreading cheer wherever I can. When I read your advertisement, I came here and purposely bought a shirt that was two sizes too large for me, so that I might bring it back and give you a chance to cheerfully refund the money."

After the money had been refunded, and the customer shown the nearest way to the street, the proprietor of the store remarked to himself:

"I think I'll take that word 'cheerfully' out of my advertisement. There's no knowing what that crank's next idea may be."

The President's Daughter;

Or

THE MARKED COIN.

By Annie Brownlee.

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CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CABIN BY THE RIVER

The trader followed the cadge road for about an hour, and then turned sharply to the right on a bridle path that wound through a rough, rocky country, fording a small stream, then up a steep mountainside, over rocks, boulders and fallen trees, till they came to the descent on the other side. After descending an almost perpendicular face of the mountain the path led into a thick pine wood, which Mildred recognized as the forest which lay between her home and the lake.

It was now so dark they could scarcely see a yard ahead. They kept straight on, the trader seeming to know instinctively where every rock and gully was in the lonely wood. Presently they came out upon the shore at the mouth of the river, and only a few yards from where Mildred had shot the Frenchman's dog. A sailboat lay in a little cove, provisioned and ready to put out at once.

The trader dismounted, as did also the two halfbreeds. Cautiously advancing towards the poor girl, he attempted to assist her to alight. But one glance from the pure girl and he fell back, for the moment abashed by the proud, haughty look on her face.

Dismounting herself, she sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and helplessly watched the trader as he tied up her bridle-rein, carefully fastening the stirrups to the back of the saddle to prevent their becoming caught while passing through the wood, then turning the pony's head back up the trail, he gave her two or three vigorous cuts of the whip. Away she bounded, carrying an empty saddle and a terrible tale to the grief-stricken home by the river.

As the poor, half-crazed girl saw the last tie that bound her to her old home depart, she broke down and wept bitterly. It was not till then that she fully realized her awful position.

The boat was ready. The halfbreed who was to accompany them was seated at the oars. They only waited for the weeping girl to take her seat.

"Will you please step in, Miss Blake?" the trader said, offering to assist her.

"Don't touch me! Don't dare to lay a finger on me or I'll drown myself!" She drew back with a look of loathing and contempt on her fair face that the man found hard to tolerate. Realizing, however, that there was nothing to be gained by quarreling with her, he stepped aside, and with a frown on his evil face, watched her extend her hand to the man at the oars, who, grinning broadly, helped her to a seat in the bow of the boat.

As darkness was approaching at the cabin by the river, and Mildred had not yet returned, the father became alarmed. The dying woman lay in a sort of stupor, only rousing now and again to ask if Mildred had returned.

Dr. Hamilton had dropped in soon after the unfortunate girl had departed for the minister's house. Finding Mr. Blake alone and his patient sinking rapidly, he decided to spend the night at the cabin.

The anxiety and suspense had grown almost unbearable. Finally the doctor took his hat and strolled up the path. Hearing the tramp of horses advancing in the distance, he hastened to the cabin to impart the glad tidings to Mr. Blake.

In a few minutes the tramp of the horses was heard before the door. Dr. Hamilton remained with the patient, while Mr. Blake hurried without. The minister and his wife had alighted and the good man was tying the horses to the garden fence.

"Good evening, Mr. Hartney! I was beginning to fear you were not coming," he said, much relieved.

"You should have known we would come, Mr. Blake, were it midnight when we got here," she said, with gentle reproach. "Did Miss Mildred not explain that the good man was over the hill baptizing a sick child when she came for us?" she asked wonderingly as she removed her bonnet and shawl.

"I haven't seen the child since she left," he said. "Did she not come with you, Mrs. Hartney?" His voice was hoarse with an awful fear.

"No, she left immediately after delivering the message. Did she not come home?" There was surprise and alarm in her voice.

"My God!" he cried, "what has happened the child?" He sank weak and helpless on the nearest chair. This last blow had almost unmanned him.

In the inner room the sick woman stirred uneasily and called her daughter's name.

"Yes, she is coming," the doctor said, and satisfied, she sank into unconsciousness again.

The minister, solemn and dignified, entered the room, at the same moment Doctor Hamilton emerged from the sick chamber. The good man laid his hand on the bowed head of the almost despairing father.

"Cheer up, my brother," he said. "The gates of Heaven stand open to receive your suffering wife; you surely would not detain her in this world of sin and suffering?"

"It's not that, father," said the minister's wife, laying her hand on his arm, "it's Miss Millie, she has not returned."

The young doctor pressed forward, his face pale and agitated with the awful possibility which had flashed through his brain.

The minister looked helplessly from one to the other. "You will please explain, mother. I don't quite understand," he said.

"There is nothing to explain. It is simply this, Miss Mildred has not come home. She left fully two hours before we did and should have been here long ago."

An anxious look crept into the minister's eyes. "My word, what has happened the child?" He ran his fingers nervously through his long, white hair and looked deeply troubled.

Mrs. Hartney stole quietly to the bedside of her dying friend, and there her tears fell thick and fast.

Doctor Hamilton touched the stricken man on the shoulder and said: "You must try and brace up, Mr. Blake; this is time for action rather than useless grief. Tell us what it is you fear?" The doctor's voice had power and strength in it and had the desired effect on the weak, heart-broken father.

He raised his face full of pain and misery and looked at the two by his side. In a few broken sentences he told them his fears. The young doctor's face grew set and stern while he listened. Taking his hat from a nail on the wall, he said:

"I am going to the village, I may be able to learn something there. My services will not be required," he said, glancing towards the sick room. "She will last an hour or two longer, but will pass away quietly."

As the doctor finished speaking, the gallop of a horse could be heard on the still night air. They listened eagerly. It came rapidly on and could soon be seen by the brilliant moonlight as it came tearing across the pasture lands

"It's Topsy!" the father cried, "but where is Mildred?"

The little creature saw them standing before the door, and with a neigh of welcome, came toward them. Doctor Hamilton caught her by the bridle. Then noting the careful way the bridle-rein and stirrups were tied up, his heart sank within him. He knew then that their worst fears were realized.

With a moan the father turned towards the cabin, and with feeble, faltering steps, crossed the threshold.

The doctor and the minister looked at each other in mute despair. Then the former said: "There's treachery abroad tonight. Miss Blake has met with foul play, but, God helping me, I will find her yet!" His face looked white and awful as the moonlight fell upon it, but his voice was strong with determination.

The white-haired minister seized his hand. "God bless you, my son, and give you success!" His voice trembled and broke as he turned away.

The moon shone clear and bright and the doctor had no difficulty in making his way to the village. He went direct to the tavern on the corner. He was fortunate enough to find the place deserted. The proprietor sat dozing behind the bar. He roused himself, however, as the heavy door swung open and the young doctor entered.

"Good evening, boss!" he said, as the doctor advanced towards the bar.

"Good evening, Mr. Miller! Business seems dull tonight?" glancing around the room.

"Yes, this is one of my quiet nights," he said, with a smile that was intended for an excuse.

"Give us something, a brandy if you have it." The doctor determined to make the most of his opportunity, and, if possible, loosen the tongue of his worthy host.

The proprietor took down his brandy bottle, poured out a generous glass and pushed it towards his guest.

"Have one yourself," the doctor said, in a companionable way.

The man hesitated a moment, bottle in hand. "Well, I don't mind if I do, seeing it's you. It's a thing I seldom do, though."

The doctor smiled. "Here's to success!" he said, raising the glass to his lips, but not draining it, however.

The genial Miller drained his glass and placed it on the shelf ready for his next customer.

The doctor leaned against the bar, his glass only half emptied. "You give a generous glass, landlord," he said admiringly, eyeing the remains of his glass.

"Yes, no man can say that Tom Miller don't give him the worth of his money," he said, his waistcoat puffing out several inches with self-importance.

"I should think not. I don't see how you can do it." The landlord failed to detect the amused satire in his voice.

"It's like this, Doctor Hamilton," he said, his bloated, brandy-soaked face shining with importance, "I hold that it's best to act on the square. When a man comes here he wants something for his money." He brought his fist down on the bar with a bang that made the glasses jump.

"Yes, honesty is the best policy," the doctor assented, wondering meanwhile how he was to broach the subject nearest his heart. Finally, with an effort, he swallowed the remains of his glass. "I believe I'll have another, landlord. That kind of puts life in a fellow after a long tramp," he said.

The smiling Miller graciously poured out the required glass and handed it to his guest.

"Have one yourself, boss. It's lonely drinking alone."

"Well, I don't care if I do. There's not much doing tonight, so we might as well be sociable."

The landlord, all smiles, raised his glass and clinked it against his neighbor's. "Here's that you may never want an honest glass while Tom Miller's behind the bar," with a smile he drained it.

Doctor Hamilton stood with his glass untasted in his hand, when the tramp of horses was heard approaching.

"There's the horses comnig home," said Miller, taking his cap from a peg on the wall. "You'll excuse me, Doctor; I'll be back in a minute."

"It's all right, boss, I'll be here," the doctor answered, availing himself of the opportunity to empty his glass in a spittoon.

A few minutes later the landlord and a halfbreed entered. The doctor recognized him as one of the men he saw in the cannoe with Pappineau that day on the river, and his heart rose with hope.

"You look as though you'd rode a long way, my man," the doctor said, addressing the halfbreed.

"Yes, long ride. Black as h——l coming through the swamp!" He tilted his slouch hat rakishly to one side and for several seconds took in the stranger.

"Have something?" the doctor asked, determined to be friends. "It'll limber you up a bit."

"Wal, I don't mind if I do," the other said; "I kinder feel dry fur sure."

The beaming Miller poured out the required glass for the halfbreed, who drank it greedily.

"Come, boss, fill up yourself, this is my treat," said the doctor. He noticed with satisfaction the flushed face of his host.

"For company's sake then," Miller said, and with unsteady hand raised the glass to his lips.

Doctor Hamilton then turned his attention to the halfbreed. "Have you been far, friend?" he asked, scanning the dark, heavy face before him.

"To the lake," the man replied.

"That's strange; I just came up the river road from the lake; I didn't see you."

"We go cross the mountain. A d——d bad road! Me thought for sure me neck gone broke," he said, in slow, monotonous tones.

"Come, landlord, give us one more before I go!" He glanced at his watch while speaking. "Time I was at home," he said.

The glasses were filled up once more. The landlord and the halfbreed drank theirs at once, but Doctor Hamilton stood dallying with his.

The landlord with a flushed face and somewhat muddled brain, entered the adjoining room for a minute. Doctor Hamilton picked up his brimming glass and handed it to his swarthy-faced companion. "Drink it," he said, "you're tired and it will do you good." Without the least hesitation the man raised it to his lips, then handed the empty glass back to the doctor.

"I suppose everything went all right?" the doctor said, with a knowing glance at the man. "Was the boat ready when you got there?" The half-drunk man shot a surprised glance at the doctor, but only grinned in reply. The young physician drew a ten dollar gold piece from his pocket and held it up temptingly to the light. "That's yours if you speak out like a man," he said, in a low, guarded voice. "Come to the corner when I leave and you may have it."

The halfbreed nodded. The fumes of brandy had muddled his brain and his mind was not quite clear.

Miller came hastily in with many apologies for having absented himself so long.

"Don't mention it, friend," the doctor smilingly said; "we don't mind the like of that here in Nipissing. I'll look in again soon. Good night."

CHAPTER VIII.

THEIR WORST FEARS CONFIRMED.

As Doctor Hamilton paused on the corner the tavern door opened and the burly form of the halfbreed could be seen approaching.

"Now, my man, tell me who it was you took across the mountain to the lake?" the doctor asked, in a stern, commanding voice.

"Wal, I suppose it's all right," he said, in a thick voice. The brandy was doing its work well. "It's like this: The boss took it into his head to steal the White Lily away. He kinder thought, friend, that you were soft on the gal. The boss thinks heaps about that gal, so he just took her off for his squaw."

"I see," said the doctor hoarsely. "Where has he taken her?"

"Don't know, boss, didn't hear him say"

"Where do you think he would be likely to take her?"

"Can't say for sure; he might go to the village of Black Hawk, on the French, or he might take her up the Temagami to his friends the Ojibways; they think heap of the boss."

"You mean Louis Pappineau?" The drunken halfbreed nodded.

Thrusting the gold piece in the other's hand, Doctor Hamilton turned away. His worst fears were realized, his darling was in the clutches of the notorious Pappineau. The thought turned him sick with a horrible fear. Throwing himself face downward on the cool, green grass, he thought long and bitterly. He knew in that moment that his love for beautiful Mildred was much greater than his fear for the opinion of his fashionable friends at home. He resolved that, come what might, he would find her and if possible win her for his bride.

As the first streaks of the rising sun appeared in the east, he came in sight of the lonely cabin. The white-haired minister was walking up and down the grassy space before the door. Seeing the doctor advancing, he went to meet him.

"What news, my friend?" he asked anxiously.

"The worst. It is as we feared, Pappineau has carried her off." He then told him all.

"My word!" said the good man, "I fear for the child. Her position is desperate."

"How are things in the cabin?" the doctor asked.

"It is over," was the reply. "She passed away without a struggle."

The two walked on and entered the cabin. They broke the news as gently as possible to the gray-haired father, already bowed down with grief for the loss of his wife.

While they sat talking the sound of oars was heard on the river. Doctor Hamilton went to the door and looked out. Coming up the river were two Indian canoes, laden with dusky looking men. The first canoe put into the little landing place and a stalwart Indian, solemn as an owl, walked up the path to the cabin.

"Good morning, Red Fox!" Doctor Hamilton said, with a pleasant smile at the great chief.

"Good morning, my brother! Red Fox, chief of all the Ojibways, was going up the pleasant river and he stop and ask for his brother."

"Red Fox's brother is sorrowful today. His wife is dead and the White Lily has been taken away, and his heart is sad."

The Indian peered through the door and saw Mr. Blake sitting with bowed head. He passed to his side and stealthily touched his arm.

"My brother, my heart is sad. Will my brother tell me more that I may know where to find the White Lily and bring her back to the lodge of her father by the Sleeping Water?"

Mr. Blake told him as best he could.

The Indian listened attentively, his heavy face settling into a dogged determination.

"Ugh! The dog trader with the smooth tongue and the toes that turn in, has taken the White Lily away across the Great Water. Let my brother be sad no more. Red Fox, the great chief, and his powerful braves, will go across the Great Water to the land of the Setting Sun and will bring back the White Lily to the lodge of the father by the Sleeping Water. And the scalp of the dog trader will hang by the door of Red Fox's wigwam, and his heart will be glad. I have spoken. My brother, farewell."

He glided softly to the door of the inner room where the remains of Mrs. Blake lay, and peered cautiously within. Dr. Hamilton motioned him to enter. He moved silently to the bedside, a look of awe on his massive face as he gazed at the white, rigid form before him. Then fearfully touching the cold, white brow, he stole silently out. Doctor Hamilton followed him.

"Red Fox, my brother," the young man said, "I would go with you and your braves across the Great Water to find the White Lily."

"It is good," he said. "My brother, who makes the good medicine, will go with Red Fox across the Great Water." His heavy face lit up with a smile.

The Indian chief called his braves to the shore and made them a long speech.

Doctor Hamilton entered the cabin and made known his intentions of accompanying Red Fox in his search for the unfortunate Mildred.

The father grasped his hand in a frenzy of gratitude. "My son, I can't thank you now. I can only say, 'God give you success!' "

Red Fox gave the doctor a seat by his side. Turning their canoes back down the river, they struck up a wild, weired chant, which was intended as a tribute of respect to the remains within the cabin.

The Indians paused for a short time at their village, then hastened on again. They kept close to the north shore of the beautiful and picturesque Lake Nipissing for some miles, undecided what course to take. Finally they determined to go first to the French River and if no trace could be found of them there, to cross the lake and go up the Sturgeon River to Lake Temagami.

They proceeded slowly, on the lookout for some sign that would tell them they were on the right course.

Just before sundown, while they were skirting a piece of rugged rock-bound shore, Red Fox's eye detected a small object floating on the surface of the lake about a half mile ahead. Bending to their paddles they soon reached it. The Indian in the bow picked it up and handed it to his chief. The hawk eyes of the old chief lit up at once.

"Ugh! It is good, my brother!" he said, turning to the doctor. "The White Lily passed this way while the moon shone on the water, and they were rowing hard."

"Why, how do you know? Have you seen anything?" the doctor asked in surprise.

The Indian handed him the piece of broken oar, which had just been taken from the water. "The dog trader break his oar, he rowing hard," he said, his swarty face glowing with pleasure.

"But this may not be his oar. It may belong to some one else."

The Indian smiled and held out his hand for the broken piece. "My brother makes good medicine," he said, "but he is not wise with the wisdom of his brother." He carefully turned the sharp, jagged end towards the doctor and pointed with satisfaction to three long, dark, silky hairs that clung to the splinters. Doctor Hamilton examined them minutely. He was satisfied that the Indian spoke the truth, for such hair as that could grow on no other head than that of Mildred Blake. Looking admiringly at the old chief, he said:

"You have a wonderful eye, Red Fox. No one else but you would have noticed that."

"Red Fox no asleep; Red Fox see heap."

As darkness was approaching, they landed in a little bay and prepared to spend the night. The braves set to work and gathered a pile of dry wood, Doctor Hamilton helping also. They soon had a huge fire kindled and the kettles swung on. The evening meal consisted of boiled fish, and venison steak roasted on sticks before the fire.

The thoughtful Mrs. Harney had prepared a good seized hamper for the doctor before leaving. This he graciously divided among the Indians, an act which was much appreciated by them. After the disappearance of a pound or two of steak, he rolled himself in a blanket and was soon sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE ENEMIES' CAMP.

The following morning they were early astir and full of expectation. Before the sunset they would be close upon the enemy. During the early part of the day they pushed rapidly ahead. But as the sun began to descend in the west they proceeded more cautiously, hugging the shore that they might not be seen. As twilight was deepening into darkness, and they had seen or heard nothing of the enemy, they camped again for the night. Red Fox would allow only a small fire made, lest they should be near the enemy and their smoke be detected.

As the sun peeped above the treetops they were in their canoes once more, and moving cautiously along the shore. Presently the hawk eyes of the Indian was fixed upon a small dark object to the right, not larger than a penny. Paddling in close he picked it up, while a cunning smile played over his dark, swarty face. It was a bit of fine brown cloth torn from a lady's gown.

With an exclamation of joy, the doctor recognized it as belonging to a gown Mildred sometimes wore.

"It's the White Lily's," he cried, delightedly.

"Ugh, just round yonder!" The old chief pointed to a rocky promontory that jutted out some distance in the lake. "See smoke?" he said, pointing to a thin smoke that was rising like a fog on the still morning air.

The chief and his braves held a council where they would be hidden from view. They could then steal across the point of land and locate the exact position of the enemy.

Landing, they drew up their canoes, examined their weapons and laid low, while Red Fox and one of the braves went to reconnoiter.

Two hours had elapsed before they returned. They had located the camp of the notorious Pappineau. He had camped with a band of Indians in a thick pine wood, near the upper falls. The White Lily, they said, occupied a teepee a little to the left, and was closely guarded. They could do nothing till nightfall. When Kiwassa entered the tents of the Dokis they would steal across and carry away the White Lily to the lodge of her father.

Meanwhile, Mildred sat sad and lonely in the teepee set apart for her use. A shadow fell across the entrance. She looked hastily up and saw the evil face of Louis Pappineau in the doorway.

"Good morning, Miss Blake! I hope I find you rested after your long trip." He was smiling and bland as usual.

Mildred did not deign to notice him, but turned her resolute little face the other way.

"Ah! I perceive, my dear, that neither your temper or manners have improved since last I saw you."

Still no reply from the silent figure before him. Her cool indifference to his presence angered him unspeakably.

"Now look here, Millie," he cried angrily, "I won't have such nonsense any longer. When I speak I wish you to answer me." Still no reply from the lovely girl, who sat tapping the soft fur, which done service as a carpet, with one small foot. Seizing her by the shoulder, he shook her roughly. "I wish you to listen when I speak!" he said, almost savage. She turned her dark eyes full upon him for a minute, but uttered no word. "I came to tell you that at sunrise tomorrow you will be my wife. Everything is arranged, so you must be prepared." He could see the muscles of her face working as he spoke, and smiled with satisfaction.

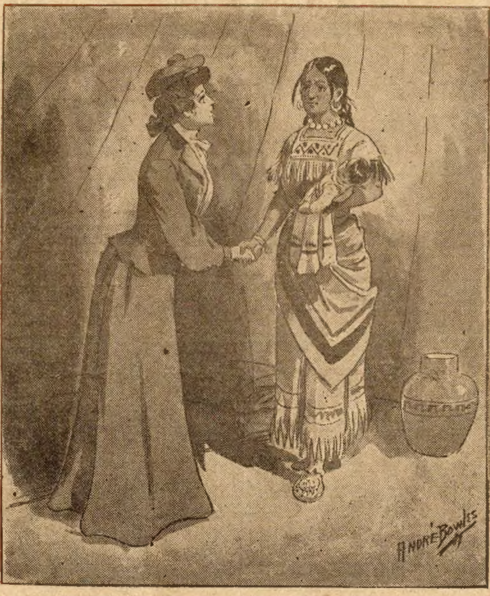
"You seem to forget, Mr. Pappineau, that I am entitled to a voice in the matter," she said, unutterable scorn in her quiet tones.

"I think I reminded you once before that your consent was not necessary. You will become my wife according to the Indian customs of marriage, whether you will it or not." His face glowed with the light of devilish triumph as he watched the pure, spotless girl whom fate in an evil hour had placed within his grasp.

"I shall never be your wife!" she answered, and there was an awful determination in her voice.

"Tomorrow morning at sunrise!" he said, with fiendish triumph, and left the lodge.

The beautiful girl threw herself face downwards on the thick, soft fur, and wept the bitterest tears she had ever shed. She knew that the trader was capable of carrying out his threats, and she need look for no assistance from the Indians, as they were strangers to her. She thought, with a pang, of Doctor Hamilton and her father. If they only knew where to find her! If the lonely, despairing girl could have got a glimpse at the little cove around the point of land, what comfort and consolation it would have brought her!



"Pansy Blossom will save the White Lily?"

As the sun was nearing the treetops, Mildred heard a low, stealthy step at the back of her teepee. The loose brush and sticks were noiselessly pushed aside and an opening made. Through this opening a young squaw with a child in her arms pushed her way.

The beautiful Mildred smiled and was about to speak, when her mysterious visitor placed her finger on her lips by way of caution. Creeping stealthily to the door, she perceived that the guard was sleeping soundly.

"I hear that the White Lily from across the Great Water is to be married at the rising of the sun?" she asked in a low voice.

"No, I'll not be married! I would kill myself rather than be that man's wife!" she said, with a shudder at the thought.

The young squaw looked at her sharply, wonder and surprise on her dusky face. Setting the papoose on the floor of the teepee, she took off its head-dress and stepped back.

The wondering girl could scarcely suppress a cry of amazement; for before her sat a miniature Louis Pappineau.

The Indian girl smiled, took the child in her arms and resumed her seat. "The White Lily not like to be the squaw of the smooth-tongued trader?" she asked.

"No, I'll never be his wife," she said, pale and trembling.

The young squaw's eyes lit up with pleasure. "I'll save the White Lily and be her friend." She whispered something low and soft in the wondering girl's ear.

"The very thing!" cried the astonished Mildred. "You'll do it? You'll save me and be my friend?" She raised her tear-stained eyes to the dusky face before her.

The girl nodded, her dusky face aglow. "Pannsy Blossom will save the White Lily from the land of the Rising Sun, across the Great Water, and will always be her friend. When Kiwassa has come to the lodges of the Dokis, Pansy Blossom will come again. Until then, my friend, farewell.

Mildred threw her arms around the new found friend and kissed her dark brow. "You will not forget. You will come again and save the White Lily?" she said.

"When the moon lies low on the water Pansy Blossom will come from the lodge of her father and save her friend, the White Lily, from across the Great Waters." She stole out again as quietly as she had came.

Mildred's heart was filled with hope. She could wait patiently now. She never once doubted but that the Indian girl would keep her word. All her life had been spent among those wild people of the forest. She grew to look upon them with a sort of wild admiration, and trusted them fully. She knew that once your friend they are always your friend, unless you wilfully make them your enemy.

This dramatic story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very startling episodes and situations. Its perusal to the end will highly reward you. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly advised to send in the price of subscription at once. If you do so, we will be glad to send you free one of our splendid stereoscopes or any six patterns you may select from our pattern page. Look at our advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Presence of Mind.

A captured Turkish officer, on being led forth for execution, asked for a glass of water before he died. On receiving it, he looked uneasily around, as if afraid of assassination.

"Drink!" said the commander. "No harm shall come to thee until thou hast drunk that water."

Instantly the prisoner dashed the water on the sandy ground, and thereby saved his life.

The Russian war frigate Olaf, prior to the outbreak of the war with Japan, which had accompanied the yacht of th Czarowitz to Copenhagen, was lying at anchor among hundreds of other ships in the harbor, when a fire was discovered in a coal cellar below, which was only a few feet from the powder magazine. There was no time to put out the fire before it could reach the magazine, and an explosion of large stores of cartridges and gunpowder contained in it probably would have destroyed not only the Olaf and the surrounding ships, but part of Copenhagen itself.

Captain Rehbinder, the commander of the Olaf, saw at once that the only thing to be done to prevent a catastrophe was to sink the ship. After sending away the crew, with the ship's papers, cash boxes, and most valuable instruments in boats, he ordered the carpenters and engineers to make a leak in the vessel, and half an hour afterward she sank in shallow water.

Next day she was raised again and sent off for repairs.

The court martial unanimously expressed the highest praise of the conduct of the captain and his subordinates. The Emperor appointed him his aide-de-camp, which is one of the highest honors conferred on Russian naval officers and the officers and men received gratitude from the Emperor's privy purse.

The Duke of Wellington was writing in his library, when, chancing to look up, he saw a stranger near him, who had entered unheard.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked the Duke.

"I am Apollyon, and have been sent to kill you."

The nobleman realized that he had an insane person to deal with; but he was equal to the emergency. With the utmost carelessness he inquired, "Got to do it tonight?"

"No."

"I am very glad, as I am quite busy now. Just send me word before you come again, and I shall be ready for you," politely bowing the crazy person out of the room.

Shortly the fellow was safe in the Bedlam whence he had managed to escape.

SOAKED IN COFFEE

Until Too Stiff to Bend Over.

"When I drank coffee I often had sick headaches, nervousness and bilousness much of the time, but when I went to visit a friend I got in the habit of drinking Postum.

"I gave up coffee entirely and the result has been that I have been entirely relieved of all stomach and nervous trouble.

"My mother was just the same way. We all drink Postum now and, without coffee in the house for 2 years, we are all well.

"A neighbor of mine, a great coffee drinker, was troubled with pains in her side for years and was an invalid. She was not able to do her work and could not even mend clothes or do anything at all where she would have to bend forward. If she tried to do a little hard work she would get such pains that she would have to lie down for the rest of the day.

"At last I persuaded her to stop drinking coffee and try Postum Food Coffee and she did so and has used Postum ever since; the result has been that she can now do her work, can sit for a whole day and mend and can sew on the machine and she never feels the least bit of pain in her side, in fact she has got well and it shows coffee was the cause of the whole trouble.

"I could also tell you about several other neighbors who have been cured by quitting coffee and using Postum in its place." "There's a Reason." Look in pkg. for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Perseverance.

The mistress of a large, fashionable home had just secured a new maid who had just come from the "ould sod." Being on friendly terms with her neighbor, she told the maid that the neighbor could use anything she desired.

One day the mistress went out for all morning. On her return she found that the telephone which had been installed in the hall was gone. Calling the maid, she inquired for it.

"Plaise, mum," answered Bridget, "th' lady across th' shtrate asked me if she cud use th' tilephone, an' Oi sint it over to her; but Oi hod an awful toime to get it unshcrewed."—Judge.

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Not Detrimental.

The proprietor of a summer resort hotel had advertised for a clerk.

"Are you good at figures?" he inquired of an applicant for the job.

"Can't be beat for accuracy," replied the applicant; "but I must admit that I'm a little slow."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," replied the boss. "The time consumed in making out the bill is included therein, you know."

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is wise to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She is the simplest and best of barometers. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a good business souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for only 10 cents. W. P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

The Result of Thought.

Said He—I suppose you have had ample time to think over the proposal I made you a week ago?

Said She—Yes, and the more I thought of it the less I thought of it.

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Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

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Friendship resembles wine—the older the better.

Women with pretty teeth will laugh at a stupid joke.

Men who are good whistlers are usually poor workers.

Many a man is worth less than the insurance he carries.

When a man earns his money he never has any to burn.

One of the first duties of a Christian is to learn to smile

A missing suspender button often leaves a man in suspense.

If gray hairs were a sign of wisdom fewer men would have them.

The average girl would rather have freckles than a low instep.

Many a man who demands justice would whine for mercy if he got it.

The dentist isn't a kingmaker, but he can supply any man with a crown.

One kind of mean man is the fellow who makes capital out of a calamity.

The slow-going dray horse lands more coin than the average race horse.

A reputation for wisdom may be acquired by applauding the opinions of your neighbors.

A fool doesn't envy wise men. A fool never meets a man who is wiser than himself.

The best any man can do who attempts to drown his troubles in drink is to float them.

The easier it is to pump a man the less the information you get out of him is worth.

It wouldn't be so bad if people who say they have nothing to say would only let it go at that.

The tobacco combine may find that its dream of continued prosperity was only a pipe dream.

At the age of three score and ten most men like to boast of their prowess as sowers of wild oats when they were young.

A baby averages up fairly well if it is half as pretty as its mother says it is, or half as homely as the neighbors think it is.

In taking on Western civilization Japan also acquired the politician who doesn't give a continental what happens to his dear native land just so he can ride into office.

King Edward has bought a team of the Vanderbilt horses, although doubtless he would much prefer a pair of Vanderbilt railroads.

THE DIPTON MYSTERY.

By Will Lisenbee.

AUTHOR OF "DON QUIRON," "THE GEORGIA RIGGSBYS," "THE YOUNG BEE HUNTERS," "THE ADVENTURES OF TOM DAYTON," ETC.

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CHAPTER X.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

Allan Darrell watched and waited with painful anxiety, his gaze riveted on the stooping figure before the bookcase.

His thoughts were in a whirl of perplexity. Who was the woman? It must be some one connected with the household. It was not Mrs. Mays, the housekeeper, nor any of the female servants. Then it must be either Mrs. Sethfield or—Katharine Hope!

The thought sent a curious sensation to the heart of the detective. Miss Hope? My God! it could not be she—he would not believe it!

In the midst of his reflections the figure slowly turned from the case, closed the door and moved toward him.

Allan Darrell still crouching behind the library table, remained breathless and immovable.

Slowly, like a spirit, the figure glided across the room, and now she was almost within reach of Darrell's arm.

With a wildly beating heart, his brain in a mad whirl, he rose slowly and confronted her.

He did not utter a word, and for a moment there was a dreadful silence.

Then the draped figure came to a sudden halt. There was a smothered gasp of terror, a quick recoil, and the sound of something falling to the floor broke the gravelike silence of the night.

The next moment the figure fled like a shadow and disappeared through the door at the rear of the library.

And Allan Darrell, the dauntless detective, who had faced danger and death a score of times, stood there in the gloom, immovable, as if transfixed.

It was a long time before he moved from his place; then lighting a match, he walked forward and picked up two books that had dropped from the hands of the mysterious visitor.

They were among the rarest of the old volumes left, and returning them to the bookcase, he closed the door and returned to his room.

All this he did in a fit of mental abstraction. Strange thoughts were passing through his brain, and a maze of bewildering emotions beset his senses.

And before his mental vision was the draped figure he had seen in the library, and a fair, oval face, framed in a mass of dark hair haunted him—a face that a stray moonbeam, struggling through the parted clouds, had for an instant cut a path through the gloom of the darkened room and revealed the face of—Katharine Hope!

He dropped into a chair and tried to think coherently. A tumult of bewildering thoughts assailed him, and when the gray dawn came he was still sitting in the chair by the open window.

Later he joined Sethfield on the lawn.

"Well, were you disturbed by any nocturnal prowler?" asked Sethfield with a smile.

"I think you will find all the old books in their usual places," answered Darrell lightly.

He had made up his mind to say nothing of Miss Hope's visit to the library. He wanted time to fathom the mystery of it, for there was a mystery; of this he felt a deep conviction.

That she was incapable of doing any wrong, he had not the slightest doubt, and he would say nothing of what he had witnessed in the library till he heard her explanation from her own lips.

"Perhaps the thief has become more prudent," said Sethfield, "and will not venture to make any more raids on the library till the coast is clear."

"It may be," assented Darrell.

"Your presence here yesterday might have excited suspicion," said Sethfield.

"It may," nodded the detective, "and I think it is quite unnecessary to remain at the Cypresses longer.

"You are right, for it is likely that the thief may at this very moment be disposing of the books in the city. We have decided to dispose of the remaining books as soon as we can settle on terms with those my wife has been corresponding with, and in the meantime, we shall remove the books into my own room where they will be locked up to prevent further depredations."

"A good idea," remarked Darrell.

After breakfast Sethfield excused himself and went into the library to write some letters, leaving Darrell to enjoy his cigar under the shade of the giant elm.

He puffed vigorously, his brow knit in a puzzled expression. In the midst of his reflections he was interrupted by the sound of a light step, and looking up, saw Miss Hope standing before him.

She was clad in a gown of soft white material whose clinging folds revealed her grace of form and movement.

Her face was pale, and there was a look of sadness in her dark-brown eyes.

It was evident that she had not seen Darrell till she came suddenly upon him, for she turned abruptly as if to retrace her steps.

Darrell rose quickly and stood with uncovered head.

"Pray do not go, Miss Hope," he said, throwing aside his cigar. "I assure you I have no intention to monopolize this quiet little nook."

"And I had no thought of disturbing you," she said with a faint smile.

"As if your presence could disturb any one!" he protested. "Pray don't go away. Mr. Sethfield has deserted me and I am left all alone to amuse myself the best I can."

"Should it amuse you if I stayed?" she asked.

"It would give me a great deal of pleasure," he replied, and there was a ring of earnestness in his tone.

"Why should I desire to give you pleasure?"

"You would not desire to give me pain?"

"How do you know?"

"By looking into your face.'

"Indeed! Is my countenance then such an open book?"

"It is a very beautiful book," he said.

"But not a rare old first edition," she said, her dark eyes upon him.

Darrell colored, a guilty look coming into his handsome countenance.

A faint smile hovered about her parted lips.

"You look bored already," she pouted, "and you said it would please you if I stayed."

"Then my face belies me," he protested.

"Oh, it is not an open book then?"

"I wish it were," he declared.

"Why?"

"That you might read it."

"Why should you want me to read it?"

"It might tell you something that I do not dare to tell."

"How mysterious! Is it a story of adventure and hairbreadth escapes?" she asked.

"A love story," he replied.

"Oh, I am glad I can't read it then."

"You do not like love stories?"

"Not other people's love stories. They must be awfully stupid. I think I should prefer—even a detective story."

She looked at him calmly as she spoke.

For once in his life Allan Darrell was completely taken aback. He knew the drift of her words, and there was a shadow of contempt in her dark brown eyes.

For the life of him he could not but feel uneasy under her glance. He felt the reproach of it and it stung him to the core.

Never before had she seemed so beautiful, and despite his dauntless spirit, he unconsciously cowered before her impassive glance.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ELM.

"Miss Hope," he said, at length, "I know what you hint at, but you do me an injustice."

"Then I am sorry," she said.

"I do not wish you to think ill of me."

"I have not said I did."

"But I fear you do."

"Do you fear it very much?"

"A great deal."

"I have not seen much proof of it."

"But you shall, if you will let me show you."

"Oh, you must not trouble yourself."

"Nothing is any trouble—nothing that I might do to win your confidence."

"After spying on me?"

"Not on you, Miss Hope. Believe me, I never dreamed of such a thing; I swear it."

"But you did."

"Unwittingly."

"But you did it nevertheless."

"I am sorry."

"Indeed! I suppose you have made your report to your masters?"

Darrell colored and threw out his hand with a gesture of dissent."

"I have said nothing," he declared.

"Oh, you must not allow sentiment to stand in the way of earning your fee."

She surveyed him calmly, her brown eyes looking straight into his.

"Miss Hope," he said, "you are doing me a grave injustice."

"Am I?"

"I can soon prove it."

"You are a detective?"

"I am."

"You are here in the employ of Mr. Sethfield?"

"I admit that."

"He set you to watch the books in the library in the hope that you might discover the robber?"

"Yes."

"And you recognized the robber last night, and she stands before you. Will you take me into custody? See, I am unarmed! I shall not resist!"

A faint smile fluttered about her dark oval face, and she extended her hands as if to receive the manacles.

A swift coloring leaped into the face of Darrell. An ungovernable fury of passion swept his being. He made a quick movement forward and took her extended hands in his own.

For a moment he said nothing. Her warm, pulsing hands lay passively in his. A swift, overpowering intoxication pulsed through his being, and for a moment he forgot everything else—everything save that he loved her—loved her with all the strength and intensity of his soul

Her face was flooded with expression Waves of color rose to the roots of her dark brown hair and then receded, leaving her pale and trembling.

She tried to withdraw her hands, but Darrell held them firmly in his own.

"You have surrendered to me and you are my prisoner," he said, with passionate vehemence. "My God, Katharine—Miss Hope—can't you see how you are torturing me? Can't you see that I love you—love you with all my soul and strength!"

"For Heaven's sake Mr. Allan, release me!" she panted. "Are you mad?"

"Yes, I am mad," he palpitated. "Is it not enough to make one mad to be tortured by the one one loves? You must listen to me. I love you—I love you more than all else in the world. I want you to be my wife—do you understand?—my wife, to love, to honor, to protect—you must answer me—you must, I tell you."

He still held her hands The color rose and receded in her face; she struggled to be free.

"In the name of Heaven, Mr. Allan!" she gasped. "What do you mean—you who are almost a stranger to me!"

"I have loved you from the first moment I saw you nearly a year ago," he said, "and I shall love you as long as I live."

"How dare you hold my hands?" she cried. "Mr. Allan, I command you to release me at once."

Her lips quivered and a sudden light leaped into her eyes.

"You must answer me first," he insisted. The warm pressure of her hands thrilled him; the magnetism of her presence intoxicated him to a maddening degree.

She struggled to free her hands for a moment and then ceased and stood looking into his eyes.

"Mr. Allan," she said, "do you wish me to call for help?"

"If you do," he replied, "I will announce our engagement to whoever comes."

"You—you would not dare do such a thing!" she cried, her eyes flashing.

"Miss Hope," he said, with emotion, "I am desperate. I would dare anything."

There was a half-suppressed vehemence in his manner and tone, and there was that in his glance that told her that he was terribly in earnest.

"But—won't you listen to reason?" she pleaded. "Think of what you are saying. You know nothing of me nor I of you, except that you were a friend of Mr. Beasley's."

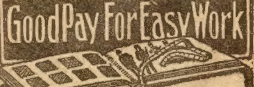
"Know you?" he breathed. "Who could look into your eyes and not know you? Katharine—I am going to call you that, for it is the dearest of all names to me—it is easy to introduce myself to you. I can satisfy you as to who and what I am, if you have not already guessed. I am Allan Darrell, and no doubt you have heard of me."

"Allan Darrell, the detective?" she gasped. "Yes, I have heard of him, but not till now did I know that he was one who gives distress to a helpless woman!"

"Katharine, for Heaven's sake, don't misjudge me!" he pleaded.

"I judge you only by what you do and say."

GoodPay For EasyWork



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"And yet you must know that it is all for love of you."

"And would Allan Darrell, whose brave and noble deeds have made him famous throughout the country, force his attentions on a helpless girl?" she asked.

"If he loved her and believed that she loved him," he replied.

"But you do not believe that," she broke in, the color rising in her cheeks.

"Can you deny it?" he asked boldly, drawing nearer to her and gazing into her eyes.

"Deny it?" she echoed. "How dare you!"

"Because such love as mine must be returned," he said. "I know that Heaven would not punish me so as to decree that you should not love me. Katharine, my love, tell me that it is so!"

He drew her nearer to him, his soul thrilled to a maddening sense of passionate vehemence. He overwhelmed her with the torrent of his love. His mad vehemence stilled the words that half rose to her lips and made her passive. His passionate words swept her like the rush of a torrent. She was no longer able to resist his fervid appeal. Like one under a mesmeric spell she stood bewildered, confused, the waves of color mounting her cheeks. And with the burning words of his love on his lips he drew her to him, he put his arms about her and drew her to his breast and kissed her on the lips again and again. And in that blissful moment he forgot all the world—everything save that he had her in his arms—the one he loved better than all others, and that she had let him kiss her.

In the sweet, intoxicating bliss of that moment there came the sound of a light step, and the next instant Mrs. Sethfield, smiling and radiant, rounded a clump of shrubbery and appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XII.

A GLIMPSE OF A HAND.

The varied experiences with which Allan Darrell's life had been made up rendered him proof against ordinary surprises, but the sudden and unexpected appearance of Mrs. Sethfield on the scene at that moment of all others, confused him for an instant.

"I beg a thousand pardons," she hastened to say as she came into the shadow of the elm, stopping abruptly.

Allan Darrell who had released Katharine at the first sounds of approach, turned to confront the intruder. In an instant he had recovered his composure and met her wondering glance with a bland smile.

"I regret to have spoiled such a charming tableau," went on Mrs. Sethfield, a touch of raillery in her voice. "Permit me to atone for my blunder by retiring.'

There was something in her tone and manner that grated harshly on the sensibilities of Darrell.

"By no means," interposed Darrell, a bold resolve taking possession of him. "Your appearance gives me the opportunity to announce that Miss Hope has made me the happiest man in all the world by promising to be my wife."

He looked straight into Katharine's eyes as he spoke. Her face was of a sudden flooded with color. Her lips parted as if about to speak, but no sound escaped them. She was not going to contradict the announcement. A rush of unutterable joy thrilled Darrell.

Mrs. Sethfield laughed gaily.

"What a surprise," she cried, turning her eyes on Katharine. "What a reticent creature you are, Katharine," she went on, "not to have intimated that you even had a lover. I congratulate you, Mr. Allan, and I wish you both all the happiness imaginable."

Darrell bowed his thanks, and then Mrs. Sethfield had passed, leaving the two alone.

Darrell's face, full of rapture, was turned to Katharine.

"Oh, Mr. Darrell! how could you?" she asked, a vivid color still in her face.

For reply he drew a small band of gold from his pocket.

"It was my mother's," he said. "I have always carried it as a talisman, to be parted with only to be worn by my promised wife."

He took her unresisting hand and slipped the ring on her finger.

Her face was flooded with emotion.

"It is cruel of you to do this," she faltered.

Her lips trembled. Her eyelids fluttered and tears stole down her cheeks.

"Oh, Katharine, my love, my wife!" he cried.

He caught her in his arms and rained kisses on her cheeks and lips.

A transport of joy thrilled him, and a sweet intoxication held him in its thrall.

Then with a quick movement she disengaged herself, and turning abruptly, fled from his presence and into the house.

He sank down onto a rustic seat and surrendered himself to the blissful sense of rapture that pervaded his soul.

A light wind stole through the branches of the old elm, stirring the sparkling leaves into a tremulous murmur. High overhead, hidden somewhere from sight, a mocking bird poured out a thrill of melody, and the world seemed to ring with its joyous song.

A few minutes later Sethfield came from the library and rejoined Darrell, and for a half hour they conversed on various topics.

An hour later Darrell took his leave.

As he was passing through the grounds he espied a white-robed figure in a summer house—a little bower of trailing vines covered with bloom, and then the face of Katharine appeared in an opening.

He stopped abruptly, his face lighting.

"I was afraid I should not get to see you before I returned to the inn," he said.

She made no reply.

Her face showed no sign that she had given any heed to his words, and a swift apprehension assailed him.

"Katharine, my love," he said, "you will let me see you again tomorrow?"

Her face disappeared from the opening in the vines, and he stood looking at the empty space, amazed and bewildered.

A moment later there was a movement behind the leafy screen, and then a shapely hand was thrust into the opening and held there a moment, and on the third finger was the little circlet of gold that had once belonged to his mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO OF A KIND.

We shall now for a brief time follow the footsteps of Buck Griffin, the tramp, whose fortunate meeting with Allan Darrell had swelled his total assets in the sum of five dollars.

His first act on parting with the detective was to hie him away to the village, where he purchased sundry articles of food, a good supply of tobacco and took his departure.

He left the village and plunged into the thickest forest, and crossing the stream, made his way to a lonely cabin in a deep glen. The lonely structure bore the evidences of having been abandoned as a habitation many years before, but its seclusion from the haunts of man and its remoteness from the glaring heat of the town rendered it a most welcome retreat for those who seek for solitude and quiet.

As Buck reached the cabin he was greeted in a hearty manner by a man of his own stamp and ilk, as was testified by his dress and manner.

"I say, Jake," said Buck, as he entered the cabin and deposited his various parcels on a bench in the corner, "I have made a killing."

"I believe you," said the other in a joyful tone. "Buck, you are a lucky dog."

"Thanks. But I'll bet a plunk you couldn't guess in a whole year who coughed up the stuff to get these things with."

"Let me see," replied Jake, fishing a plug of tobacco from the parcels and taking a liberal chew. "Is it a hard one?"

"Guess and see."

"Well, was it the parson?"

Buck laughed.

"Missed," he said.

"Was it for work you did?"

"You never would guess, I see that," interposed Buck.

"Then tell me."

"It was Allan Darrell!"

"The detective?"

"Sure thing."

"Great Gosh! What are you giving me?"

"The truth."

"Well, that is a corker. Where did you see him?"

"Up the road near the village."

"Did he know you?"

"Did he? He never forgets a cove that he has once done business with."

"How does it happen that he did not pinch you?"

"I told him I had reformed."

"And he believed you?"

Buck shook his head.

"I ain't going to say that," he replied. "But he wanted to use me, and he was willing to let me alone so long as I didn't try to work any games on the natives."

"How does he expect to use you?"

"Well, he was onto my little game about the man who was mixed up in that murder business a month or so ago here at Dipton."

"How did he get onto it?"

"Oh, Lord, ask me something easy. He knows everything."

"And he made you tell him all you knew?"

"And spoiled your little game?"

"Oh, I don't know. It don't pay to buck Allan Darrell."

"By the powers, I believe you. Then the game you was onto is all up?"

"I can't say that."

"How is that?"

"There may be something in it still, only in a different way."

"How do you mean?"

"Darrell is here, I understand, at work on the murder case."

"Well, I'll be blowed! I didn't know there was anything in it for a detective."

"Nor did I, but Darrell hinted that there might be something big in it."

"That's interesting."

"You know what I told you about the cove I seen standing over the dead body the night of the murder?"

"Yes."

"And I said I believed the fellow lived in this neck of the woods somewhere?"

"Yes."

"Well, Darrell thinks as I do, as far as I can make out, and he is hot on the trail. If I can identify the man he is looking for there may be something big in it."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"Find the murderer if I can."

"And then what?"

"Put Allan Darrell onto him."

"Do you mean it?"

"Didn't I tell you I had reformed?"

"Buck, you make me weary."

"I mean just what I say."

"When you might make a handsome thing out of it if you carried out your original plan?"

"Look here, Jake, I have played in enough hands to know my hand pretty well when I look at it. Sooner or later Darrell will land this chap, whoever he is, and both of us along with him if we don't keep out of the net. Besides, in this business we have a chance to do the square thing and make something out of it, which is a great deal better than taking a risk at something that may look a little better."

"Maybe you are right. But what is your plan?"

"We must scatter out and visit every house in this region and look for the man I saw that night the murder was committed."

"All right."

"From my description you will be able to identify the fellow or so near it that you can easily help me cover the ground. If you are in doubt I can soon settle it."

"But, Buck, before we begin work let us have a taste of this grub. I can never work on an empty stomach."

"Nor on a full one, if I remember rightly," interposed Buck with a grin. "But it shall be as you say. Take that can and go to the creek and bring some water and I'll kindle a fire so we may have some coffee."

"Coffee! Did you say you had coffee?" exclaimed Jake, a glow of pleasant anticipation on his face.

"Sure thing," nodded Buck. "Coffee is the staff of life—when a fellow hasn't got liquor."

Just then the sound of a step coming from without broke the silence, and the pair looked at each other in swift alarm.

This strong story will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. Now is a good time to subscribe for the Ledger. Great stories of romance and mystery, of adventures and fascinating detective work, of the exploits of boys and girls, together with poetry and humor are steadily appearing in these pages. You should take the Ledger regularly. If you have not yet subscribed or your subscription has expired, send in your order for the paper at once. Boys who would like our splendid stereoscopes and ladies who desire the latest patterns are requested to note that we are giving these fine premiums absolutely free as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Where Women Vote.

"New Zealand was the first British colony to adopt women's suffrage—as far back as 1893," says a writer in the London Chronicle. "The New Zealand woman was given universal adult suffrage. Though she had not sought it, she immediately used it. Out of 140,000 women, 109,000 had placed themselves on the register in a few months, and 90,000 voted in the general election of November, 1893. They voted peacefully and in order during the day, while the men were at work, and left the booths to the men in the evening. They have voted with similar regularity and orderliness ever since. How do the women use their powers? Very calmly, by all accounts. Roughly, women make very much the same use of the franchise as do men. The result has not produced either a new heaven or a new hell. Men have not been deprived of their rights. There has been no disorder or unseemly behavior—no strange and sudden revolution in dress or manners. Enfranchisement has led neither to divided households nor divided skirts. Families, as a matter of fact, generally vote on the same side. But on the other hand, there is a general agreement that family life has become brighter, that husbands and wives have more subjects in common to talk about, and that women are really setting themselves to study and watch public affairs.

"The effects, in fact, have been rather social than political. Women seem to be treated with more real respect—and not merely at election times. There has arisen between the sexes that sense of equality which is perhaps the only permanent and enduring social basis. Speaking generally, they have simply become citizens, whose part in public affairs is not sharply distinguished from that of men. New Zealand women have simply stepped into equality. And fourteen years of political life have shown them equal to that equality. Working side by side with man, woman still keeps her place—'not like to like, but like in difference.'

"The word pictures of which colonists used to have so many given them of domestic discord, of children forgotten, husbands uncared for, dinners uncooked, dress and appearances neglected—have already almost passed from memory. It is the commonest sight to see husband, wife and grown-up children walking or driving cheerfully to the polls together. The head of the family has become a more important factor in politics than of old."

Over the Telephone.

This being a true story of a recent occurrence the prominent politician will be known as Mr. John Brown, and his intimate friend, a politician of less prominence, as Mr. James McCoy. It seems that at about noon Mr. Brown was unduly exhilarated when seen by his friend, and after exacting from him a promise that he would at once go home Mr. McCoy went to his office. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon he responded to a telephone call, and was just a little flurried on learning that Mrs. Brown was at the other end of the wire.

"Have you seen John today?" she asked.

"I did, Mrs. Brown. He was called to Greensburg on important business this morning, but just a little while ago I got a message from him that he would start back on the next train. He'll be in town in about an hour."

Mr. McCoy was still at work in his office at 5 o'clock when again he was called to the telephone. Again it was Mrs. Brown.

"Has John got back yet, Mr. McCoy?"

"Yes, but he had several important matters to attend to, and just started for the street car a few minutes ago. He'll be home in three-quarters of an hour at the latest."

"I am very much obliged, Mr. McCoy, but I put John to bed half an hour ago."

All of which goes to show that there are times when a lie well stuck to is not as good as the truth.

One on the Waiter.

One day a man, apparently white, came into the best restaurant in Atlanta. The head waiter looked him over and thought he had negro blood in him. In fact, he was a very light quadroon.

"Here you," the head waiter said, "you are colored."

"O, no, I ain't," the man replied. "Not in the sense you mean."

"But you are mighty dark."

"I know I am, but that is because I am a Malay."

The head waiter was nonplused. He looked again and then asked suspiciously: "What is a Malay? Where is he from?"

"Why," said the man easily, "Malays are from Malaria."

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You are troubled with that loathsome and dangerous disease Catarrh. You have longed for relief. You have wanted to be rid of the hawking, spitting, the foul breath, the constant annoying discharge from the nose, the disgusting dropping of mucus into the throat. You have been told a cure was impossible. You have tried doctors and various methods only to meet with failure.

I come to tell you that CATARRH CAN BE CURED. Right in your own home by means of an easy, painless, unfailing method, you may be cured. You can rid yourself of all the discomforts, the annoyances, the loathsomeness of Catarrh. The disease is all of these things, as you will learn by sad experience, if you have not already done so. It always has a small beginning, but it encroaches, steadily, persistently, relentlessly, until the vital organs of the body are attacked, and you face pain, lingering torture and death.

I have cured thousands. I can cure you if you come to me before it is too late

I have decided to distribute 500 free treatments, **absolutely without charge,** to Catarrh sufferers. I want you to see my method, know what I have done for others. My life has been spent in the study of CATARRH, its Causes and Cure. Now I offer to share with you my experience and knowledge on the subject. I have been successful. I want YOU to profit by my success by taking advantage of my offer—a free treatment for Catarrh, gladly given to sufferers from the disease.

Don't delay. Write immediately. A post-card, with your address upon it, sent off NOW will secure one of the free treatments. An envelope containing your address, put into this mail will bring you what you have longed for, but despaired of—a cure for Catarrh. Tomorrow may be too late. Be one of the fortunate people to get one of these free treatments for Catarrh. Write right now.

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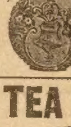

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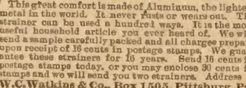
Before you buy a watch cut this out and send to us with your name and address, and we will send you by express for examination a handsome WATCH AND CHAIN C. O. D. $3.75. Double hunting case, beautifully engraved, stem wind and stem set, fitted with a richly jeweled movement and guaranteed a correct timekeeper, with long Gold plated chain for Ladies or vest chain for Gents. If you consider it equal to any $35 GOLD FILLED WATCH Warranted 20 YEARS pay the express agent $3.75 and it is yours. Our 20 year guarantee sent with each watch. Mention if you want Gents' or Ladies' size. Address M. FARBER & CO., B15, 28 Quincy St., CHICAGO.

TEA AND COFFEE



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This is a very useful book, being a guide to the successful Hunting and Trapping of Wild Animals. It tells how to fish; gives right season for trapping; how to make, set and bait traps for all kinds of wild animals; how to make and use birdlime; to tell true value of skins; to skin all animals; to dress and tan skins, furs, and leather, with or without wool or hair, to skin or stuff birds, baits and hooks for fishing; to fish successfully without nets, spears, snares, "bobs" or bait, a great secret; to choose and clean guns, to breed minks for skins; Bryon's Lightning Gunner, Sportsman's Hints, Helps and Suggestions, list of firms who buy and sell skins, furs, etc. In order to introduce our catalogue of bargains we will send you "Life in the Woods" upon receipt of 10 cents, stamps or silver. Write today to UNITED SPECIALTY CO., Book Dept., 94 DEARBORN STREET, CHICAGO, ILL. Ask for "Life in the Woods," when ordering.

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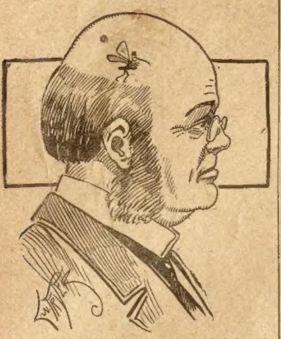
Athletics.



"Prof. Mosquito was recommended by his family physician to take a brisk walk around the block before partaking of a hearty meal."—News Item, Bugville Gazette.

And one good turn is usually followed by two bad ones—in a variety show.

JOKES AND

Then He Started.

Staylate (11 p. m.)—I understand you have a new gasoline runabout?

Miss Caustique (strangling a yawn)—Yes—and it reminds me of you in one respect.

Staylate—Indeed! In what respect?

Miss Caustique—I have an awful time getting it started.

Hard to Understand.

The poor horse had fallen in the street.

"What is the matter with him, pa?" asked little Bobby.

"Why, my son," replied pa, "the poor beast has lost his wind."

"Lost his wind, pa? How in the world could he lose his wind when he is a draft horse?"

Even Brains Fail Sometimes.

Great Lawyer's Wife—And so your client, Bloody Mike, has been convicted. How did you happen to lose the case?

Great Lawyer (sorrowfully)—The witnesses against him were all preachers and bishops, and I couldn't break the force of their testimony. When I'd ask one of them if he hadn't been in the penitentiary at such and such a time for horse-stealing or something, it didn't have the usual effect on the jury—they only grinned.

Out of the Ordinary.

Hyker—Young Westlake is certainly a financial genius.

Pyker—He is, eh?

Hyker—Yes. Why, he made his debut in Wall street six weeks ago with $1,000,000, and he still has half of it.

Losing Weight.

"Nora," said the Oak Park housewife, "I don't see you talking with your beau any more."

"Yez mean th' icemon, mum?" sighed Nora. "Sure, awn he don't come any more."

"Don't come any more? Why, I used to hear him standing under the window telling you his heart was melting."

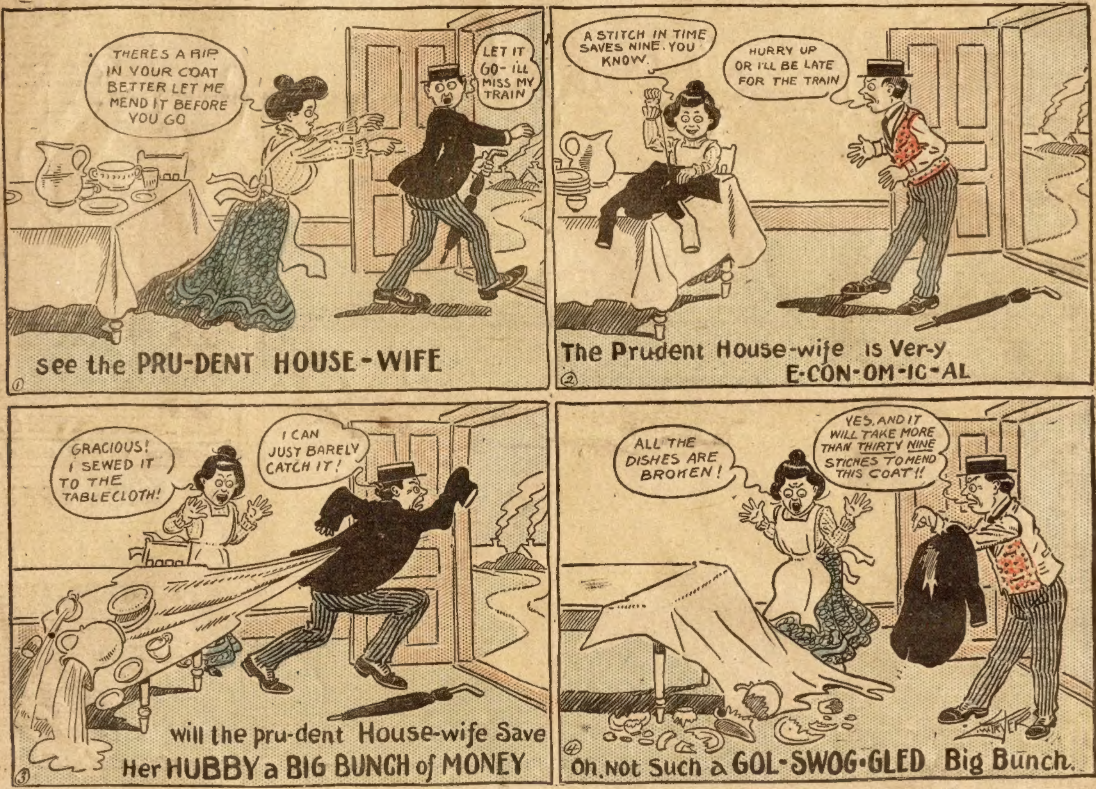
"Yis, mum, but yez see, his ice was meltin' faster thon his heart awn th' poor mon lost his job."

Failed to Win.

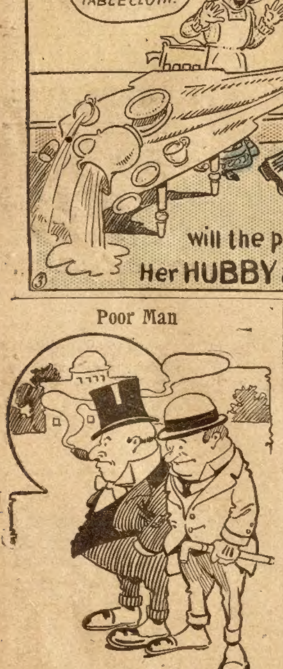
Joe (at club window)—Say, there goes a winsome little woman.

Fred (sadly)—Yes. I thought she could be won some, but she informed me that I was entitled to another think.

THE CHEERFUL PRIMER


THERES A RIP IN YOUR COAT BETTER LET ME MEND IT BEFORE YOU GO
LET IT GO- I'LL MISS MY TRAIN
1
see the PRU-DENT HOUSE-WIFE
A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE. YOU KNOW.
HURRY UP OR I'LL BE LATE FOR THE TRAIN
2
The Prudent House-wife is Ver-y E-CON-OM-IC-AL
GRACIOUS! I SEWED IT TO THE TABLECLOTH!
I CAN JUST BARELY CATCH IT!
3
will the pru-dent House-wife Save Her HUBBY a BIG BUNCH of MONEY
ALL THE DISHES ARE BROKEN!
YES, AND IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN THIRTY NINE STICHES TO MEND THIS COAT!!
4
Oh, Not Such a GOL-SWOG-GLED Big Bunch.

Poor Man



Mr. Jinks—I hear that your wife has made a record of 800 pies baked this year.

Mr. Blinks—How about my record? I eat 'em.

Always Together.

"Yes," announced the guide, "there goes Rain-in-the-Face. Quite a celebrated Indian."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the tourist. "And who is that other Indian with him?"

"Oh, that is Chief Big Umbrella."

A Better Brand.

Tom—Shortleigh has given up the idea of joining that north pole expedition. He says he doesn't care to court death in the Arctic regions.

Jack—Well, I don't blame him—seeing that he is now courting a rich widow.

A Danger Signal.

Hix—Come, let us hurry past that house with the red flag at the door.

Mrs. Hix—Why?

Hix—Because it indicates danger—either smallpox or an auction.

Then and Now.

Him (quoting)—After man came woman, you know.

Her—Yes, but man has been after woman ever since.

Feminine Viewpoint.

Said He—That is a very old joke about the scarcity of men at the summer resorts.

Said She—Well, it may be old, but it's no joke.

Quite Sufficient.

Agent—Excuse me, but have you a piano?

Shortleigh—Yes.

Agent—Well, I have an automatic attachment for pianos that I'd like to show you.

Shortleigh—Nothing doing. Our piano has a sheriff's attachment on it and I guess that will hold it for a while.

Not Quite Clear.

Blox—Say, can you let me have $5 for a couple of weeks?

Knox—I suppose you are an honest man?

Blox—Certainly. I tell you it pays to be honest.

Knox—Then why is it you haven't got $5 about your person?

Dead Broke.

The Count—Yes, I was almost positive ze fair girl was thinking of me.

The Duke—Then why didn't you walk up and say: "A penny for your thoughts?"

The Count—Too risky, monsieur; far too risky. I didn't have a penny.

A Prolonged Call.

Mrs. Casey—Did yez call on Mrs. O'Toole yet?

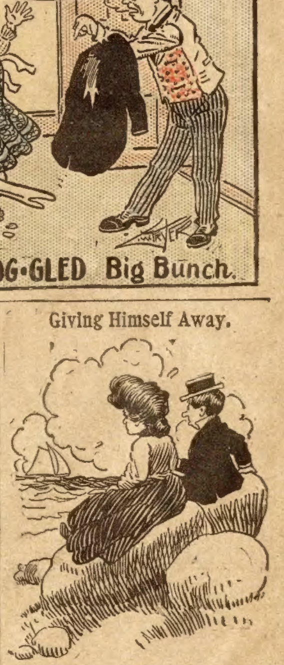
Mrs. Hogan—Shure! Oi wint over there yisterday, an' called till Oi wuz hoarse.

Asked and Answered

Little Willie—What is silence, pa?

Pa—The counterfeit of wisdom, my son.

Giving Himself Away.



Miss Richpop—I love the rush and sweep of the big sails.

Mr. Yardsilk (absent mindedly)—We are going to have one tomorrow at Sellman's. Clean sweep. Everything marked down two cents on the dollar.

JOLLITY

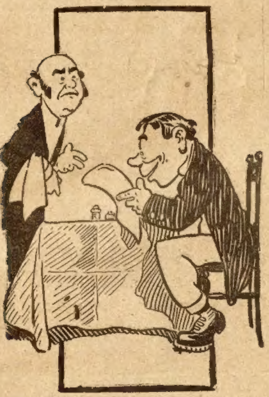
A CALIFORNIAN'S

Successful Experiments With Food.

A man in Calif. took up the question of food to see if he could recover from an old case of dyspepsia from which nux vomica, pepsin and other remedies gave him no relief.

He started in with Grape-Nuts food and his dyspepsia quickly disappeared. He also left off the use of coffee and took Postum Food Coffee in its place. He writes that he has been put right, perfectly well, and going to remain so by continuing the use of Grape Nuts and Postum.

It is worth trial by any one who desires to be well, to change the diet, and particularly to leave off coffee. Grape-Nuts food contains elements that rebuild the grey matter in the nerve centers and brain and give one a feeling of reserve strength and vigor. This food is perfectly cooked at the factory, and can be served instantly with cream. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."



Pat—Who are yez?

Waiter—I am the head waiter, sir. Can I wait on you?

Pat—No; sind me th' foot waiter. Oi want to order pigs' fate.

His Loss.

"June is me favorite month," said the poetical hobo, as he scribbled an ode on the back of a tomato can label.

"'Tain't mine," sighed Sandy Pikes, lugubriously. "I always have to go barefooted troo dat month."

"Barefooted? Why, how is that, pal?"

"Why, you see, people throw all deir old shoes at de June brides."

Proof Positive.

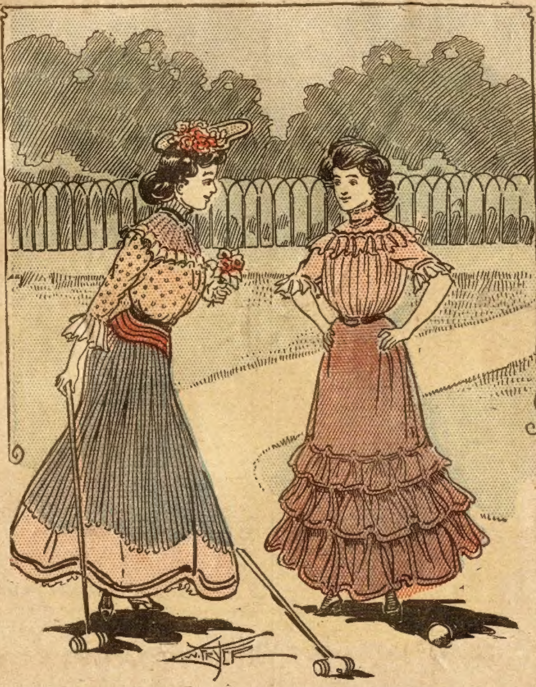
The Medium—Do you believe that communications can be received from the dead?

The Caller—Sure. Only this morning I received a letter from Philadelphia.

English as She is Spoke.

Myer—I'm going over to the barber shop to get a hair cut.

Gyer—Why don't you get them all cut while you are at it?



Hilde—And as my beau tried to kiss me, I was so surprised that ——

Rose—Well?

Hilde—I very nearly stopped him.

Didn't Recognize the Nurse.

"What a bright little thing!" exclaimed the society woman, patronizingly cooing at a baby out for an airing in the park. "Whose little one is this?"

"Yours, ma'am," replied the nurse. "I'm the new nurse that kem yistherd'y."

In Old Egypt.

The sight-seeing camels halted at the ruined city.

"And here," announced the guide, "are the columns of the ancient Egyptians. They have been lost and found many times during the past ages. Rare sight, ladies and gentlemen."

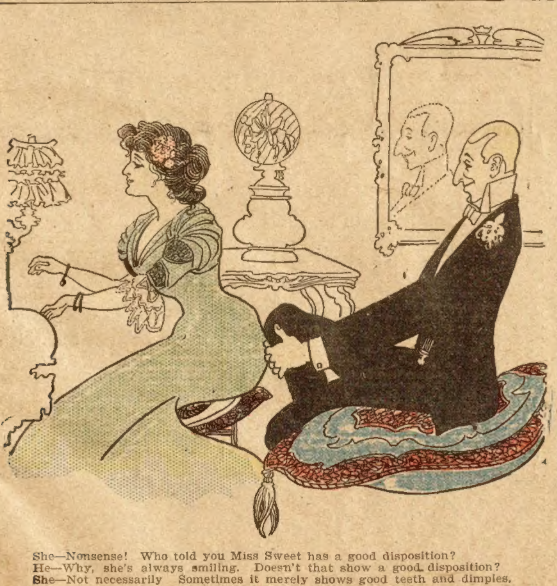
Old Uncle Hardacre from Kansas dumped the ashes out of his pipe on the back of the camel.

"Don't see nothing rare about it," he grumbled. "By heck, we have plenty of lost and found columns at home."

Hewn on Granite.

"Don't you know the editors say you should never roll your manuscript?' said the tall cave man.

"That may be," replied the poet of the stone age, "but how in the name of the great dinotherium am I to get them to the editorial office without rolling them in a wheelbarrow?"



She—Nonsense! Who told you Miss Sweet has a good disposition?

He—Why, she's always smiling. Doesn't that show a good disposition?

She—Not necessarily. Sometimes it merely shows good teeth and dimples.

The Editor's Mistake.

Ellis Chappell of Central, dropped into this office Saturday.

"I just came in to tell you that you made a mistake in last week's paper," he said.

"Very well," we began a little sourly—you know a fellow doesn't like to be told that he's made a mistake—"what was it?"

"Why," said our visitor, breaking into a grin, "you said that the world had been going to hell for thirty-four years. You're mistaken. It's fifty."—Lemar Democrat.

An Ounce of Prevention.

Mrs. Nubbins—Why do you employ that darky to whitewash the hen-coop? You know he's the most notorious chicken thief in the neighborhood.

Mr. Nubbins (a practical man)—I want him to see how poor and lean my chickens are.

Those Dear Girls.

Nell—See my new engagement ring, dear? Isn't it a beauty?

Bess—Did Tom give it to you?

Nell—Yes.

Bess—Talk about its being a beauty—you ought to have seen the one he wanted to give me.

All Alike.

First Weary Tramp (as limited express glides by)—It's hard walkin' on a railroad, Bill. Don't yer wish ye was in one o' them sleepin' cars, Bill?

Second Tramp (thoughtfully)—Yis, ef I c'u'd have a lower berth in the middle o' th' car.

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A YOUNG GIRL'S PERIL;

Or

The Wellington Jewels.

By T. C. HARBAUGH, author of "Robespierre," "Alice of Maryland," "Bluebell's Secret," etc.

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Begun in No. 29, July 20. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAGE AND ITS BIRD.

Not until she had crossed the threshold of that tall, strange house after being halted on her way to the police station did Vestal Cummings get a good look at the person into whose hands she had fallen.

She was conducted into a room at one side of the wide hall and for the first time got a fair glimpse of the man's face.

She recoiled with a little cry of astonishmant.

The person who faced her was Park Knowles!

Yes, the same Park Knowles to whom she had gone with a demand that he tell all he knew about the missing jewels.

Now she had fallen into his hands and she could only conjecture what would happen.

He looked at her a moment with a smile gathering at the corners of his mouth and then:

"So you are going to the police station?"

"Yes," frankly admitted Vestal.

"And why, pray, my dear Miss Cummings?"

"I was going there to tell the truth."

"To confess that you took the Wellington gems?"

"No! I did not take them as you well know."

"That has the shadow of accusation."

"Just as you wish to take it," answered Vestal. "You would not listen to me when I went to your house the other night and I have to take other measures."

"Which means——"

"That I shall convince the authorities that I did not take the jewels."

Park Knowles was silent for a moment. He seemed to pity the young girl who had fallen into his power. He watched her a little while and then said:

"You have doubtless heard of the arrest of one Paul Partland?"

"I have heard."

"He is your friend?"

A deep telltale flush suffused Vestal's face and Park knew.

"He is shielding some one, for he refuses to tell where he found the pearl he restored to Mrs. Wellington."

"Yes," said Vestal. "He must be."

"And you have never thought whom he might be shielding?"

"He may have a friend——"

"He has a very dear friend, I'm thinking," and the speaker smiled as he regarded Vestal.

"He is shielding you, miss."

The fair stenographer uttered a cry.

"Why should he shield me?"

"Cannot you guess?"

"It is a mystery to me. If Paul——"

"Come," broke in Park Knowles. "Let us get at the core of the apple. He found the pearl in your room."

A strange and terrible light seemed to break in upon the girl.

"In my chamber? One of the missing gems? Impossible!"

"It is true," calmly said Park Knowles. "He found it nowhere else and that is why he is keeping sealed lips just now."

"But how came it there?" cried Vestal. "Who carried the pearl to my room?"

"You are perhaps the proper person to answer that question. I leave it with you."

"But I can explain everything to the police and you must let me go."

"Not just yet," said her tormentor. "I brought you to this house to tell you something——"

"About the missing gems?"

"Perhaps. In the first place, Miss Cummings, you have seen those gems in Vanderbeck's possession?"

"He kept them in trust for their owner."

"Yes, I know. Now, do you know that Mrs. Wellington has some suspicion that Vanderbeck isn't doing exactly the right thing in this case? She's a singular woman."

Vestal was looking straight into his face.

"You don't mean that she suspects Vanderbeck's honesty?" she exclaimed.

"Not exactly that, but if they don't strike the trail of those gems soon she will make a demand for their value of Lloyd Vanderbeck."

"And he——"

"Why, he will find himself in an unenviable position," smiled the young sport.

"That would not be very nice for Vanderbeck," said the girl.

"No, not when he hopes at some future time to have control over the Wellington millions as he now has over his own."

"You don't mean that Lloyd Vanderbeck is a lover of Eudora Wellington?"

"He is nothing else."

"And the woman herself?"

"I haven't sounded her heart if the creature has such a thing," responded Park. "Now you see if Vanderbeck could recover the gems and place them in his dear Eudora's lap that would enhance his chances, matrimonially speaking."

"I do not doubt it, but this is nothing to me," said Vestal, who had grown tired of such by-play. "I want to go on my mission."

"To the police?"

"Why not? Paul Partland is my friend and I can secure his release if he is not already out now."

"He is out," said Park Knowles. "They found him stubborn and thought him innocent so far as any knowledge of the real taking of the gems is concerned. Therefore you are not needed at police headquarters."

"I want to surrender myself. They have been looking for me for several days——"

"Let them look."

"If you were to tell all you know you might put a different face on the jewel mystery."

"How so?"

"You came often to Vanderbeck's office and you were there not long before the gems turned up missing."

The brows of Park Knowles suddenly darkened.

"You do not intimate, miss?"

"I have mentioned no names," was the reply as Vestal returned his look with interest.

"But your voice, your look——"

"Insinuates? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes."

"Take it as you please, then," and Vestal turned toward the door. "I must go. You have no right to hold me here a prisoner against my will."

"No right perhaps, but I *may* elect to keep you here awhile."

"For what purpose?"

"For this purpose," and the speaker came suddenly forward and laid his hand on Vestal's arm.

"I am going away," said he as his face grew dark and lowering. "I deem it best to have you under lock and key till I am well out of this atmosphere. Don't you see?"

Vestal's face was white and she began to understand the motive that prompted Park Knowles.

"You don't want me to put the police on your track till you are well away?" said she.

"That is it," exclaimed the young man. "I cannot have you near the police with your denial of the crime."

"You mean that you think I might name the real criminal?"

"You might give a little annoyance. Now, my dear Miss Cummings, you will remain here in this house——"

"How long?"

"Until you are released. It won't be for long. I think I can promise you that."

"And my jailer?"

"We'll call her Meave. Would you like to see her?" and Park moved toward the door which he opened.

"Meave," he called and footsteps were heard.

In another moment a face appeared at the door and Vestal saw a large, dark-faced woman of forty with a pair of hawk-like eyes that seemed to look her through.

"This is the young lady you are to keep here, Meave," said Park, addressing the woman. "This is Miss Cummings. You understand the rest. Meave?"

The woman bowed and with another look at Vestal retired.

"Now make yourself at home," said Park to the girl. "If you get too gay Meave will wring your neck. She has her orders. That's all." And in another moment the young stenographer was alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE IDENTICAL JEWELS.

Several hours after Park Knowles' departure, a man who stood against a table in a small upstairs room in another part of the city, saw his door open and a man, whose face was partly concealed by a soft, black mask, came in.

"Don't get frightened, Nippers," said the caller as he came forward. "This is simply a business visit, nothing more."

Mr. Henry Nippers was known as a diamond fence, one of the richest vultures of his kind in the city and more than one shady transaction had passed through his hands.

"No one in the little room?" cautiously inquired the newcomer, casting a glance toward another door. "We're severely alone?"

"I'll show you," and Nippers opened the door leading into the adjoining room and showed that it was empty.

The stranger did not remove his mask, but came closer to the proprietor of the place, dropping his voice a bar as he did so.

"I want to show you something," he said and diving into his pocket he brought to light a little packet which he proceeded to unwrap.

In another minute he had revealed a lot of diamonds and other gems that almost made Nippers gasp for breath.

"Aren't they daisies?" queried the man with the gems. "Did you ever see their like, old boy?"

Nippers said he never had.

"Where——"

"Come. No questions and no lies," broke in the other. "I am here for business."

"But these must be famous gems?"

"They are."

"They may be the Wellington jewels?"

"They are!"

Nippers looked at the pair of eyes that blazed behind the mask and then allowed his gaze to fall again to the jewels.

"Why did you bring them here?" he asked.

"Why do people bring anything here? You buy such bargains?"

"Sometimes, but——"

"You'll find a bargain in these. You know how to dispose of such trinkets.'

"But everybody is looking for those gems."

"And you have them. Don't you see, Nippers?"

"You have been here before?'

"Never was in your den till now."

"Who told you——"

"We'll not discuss this point. What will you allow me for the lot?"

"I don't care for it."

"You don't, eh? I'm here to trade."

The speaker drew from an inner pocket a revolver which he deliberately cocked in Nippers' presence. "Now Mr. Henry Nippers, I'll take twenty thousand dollars for the swag."

"But I don't care to deal with you."

"There's the Wellington jewels and here's the best argument I can produce for their purchase."

The man lurched forward and his hand came down upon Nippers' shoulder.

The muzzle of the weapon stared him in the face.

"A fair exchange is no robbery," he went on. "You have the funds in your shop right now. I'll take the twenty thousand and you keep the flashers."

Nippers looked into the gaping muzzle of the leveled weapon and fell back the length of that long arm.

"It's business, eh?" cried the masked man. "I can't stay here all night."

"I'll do it," said the rich fence, "I'll take the risk to save my life.

"Which you'll be saving. Now produce the money and the sparklers are yours."

Nippers was followed to the safe where he kept his money and the amount demanded was counted out.

As the unknown one raked the bills across the table with an inward chuckle Nippers leaned forward for a look at the face which he but partly saw.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the man with a laugh as he divined Nippers' intention. "Keep your distance. Good night, Mr. Nippers. You've got a great bargain in the flashers and you'll be a fool if you don't come out best on your bargain."

The man was gone and Nippers stared at the heap of jewels as though they were the sparklers of a vision of the night.

He knew that the man had told the truth, that the gems were the Wellington stones for which the detectives and police of the whole city were looking. And they had fallen into his hands without an effort. He had them in his hands and the girl who was deemed guilty of the theft had not brought them to him.

But who was his mysterious visitor? That was the query that puzzled him.

At last he raked the jewels together and put them away. Just what he would do with them he had not determined. Time enough for that. He wanted to sleep over the matter and when he had locked the doors of his safe and of the house as well he settled back in his chair and cogitated over his pipe.

The night grew toward morning.

There was no bed for Henry Nippers.

With such a lot of jewels in his possession he could not close his eyes.

At last the first streaks of another day stole into the little shop.

"The "fence" roused himself and went to the window.

The city was already awake.

He heard the newsboys crying their wares on the street and mechanically he listened.

"What's that?" cried Nippers as the words came up to him. "What's that the kid's getting off?"

He sprang from the room and down the stairs.

In another moment he held a damp newspaper in his hand and his eyes were staring at the prominent headlines.

"Great Caesar!" cried Nippers. "Murdered? Mrs. Wellington?"

He came back to the seclusion of his room for an undisturbed perusal of the paper.

"Well, that was not such a bad bargain, after all," he said aloud to himself. "The owner of the gems is dead and now they won't be quite so eager to hunt them up."

The sparkle of greed was in his eyes and he read with avidity the account of the startling crime that was to put a new face on certain events with which we have been dealing.

An hour later Henry Nippers opened his shop for business, but he could not forget the man who had dropped in the previous night and sold him the Wellington jewels.

Who was he, anyhow? And had the girl —Miss Cummings he believed her name was —sent him? After all, how did this girl who was but a stenographer, know that he was a "fence" and bought stolen swag, although he was accounted the most honest of the many such in the city?

The whole city seemed to shudder over the news that the papers carried to the breakfast tables. Eudora Wellington dead? Murdered? It was too terrible. What would society do without her? And, after all, wasn't the taking of the famous jewels a sham?

The news variously affected people.

Lloyd Vanderbeck picked up the paper that had been brought to his table and glanced over the news.

Suddenly his eyes caught the glaring headlines, and the sheet almost fell from his hands.

He pushed back his chair and slipped into the library.

There he seated himself and turned white and red by turns, but remained white the longest.

"Now for the other game!" said he as he rose and stood erect, catching sight of his face in the mirror at the end of the bookcase. "If I can only get possession of those papers——"

Just then some one came down the hall.

Vanderbeck turned toward the door.

It opened as he slipped the bolt and a hand was thrust into the room.

It held in its grip a packet which was flung toward the desk and, strange to say, it alighted there.

Vanderbeck walked over and picked it up. There was some writing on a band about the packet and he read at a glance:

"These are the Donnixetti papers. Please send ten thousand to John H. Filley, General Delivery, and do it quick."

That was all.

Vanderbeck's face went white again, but his eyes got an intense look of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ITALIAN SKELETON.

The Gold Wolf of Gold street seemed to recover his composure in a little while.

He reached over and picked up the papers again.

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75c now for Massive Morris Chair—50c monthly . . $4.85

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75c now for Folding Reed Go-Cart—50c monthly . . $5.05

"There's no mistake," said he. "These are the right ones."

Just then the bell sent its clear tones through the house and he heard footsteps in the hall.

"What, another visitor at this early hour?" said he.

In a second he heard the sound of feet in the corridor beyond the room and then the door slowly opened.

"Good morning," said the man who came in. "Mr. Lloyd Vanderbeck, is it not?"

The banker bowed, at the same time eyeing his caller with a pair of keen optics.

"My name is Salmon Search," said the unknown. "I have called on a little business."

Vanderbeck had swept the Donnixetti papers in the drawer of the private desk in the nick of time.

"What is your profession, Mr. Search?" he asked.

"I am a detective."

"Ah!"

The Gold Wolf lost a little color.

"I cannot see what business you may have with me."

"No? Then I will enlighten you without more ado. You were custodian of the jewels of the late Mrs. Eudora Wellington?"

"Yes."

"They were taken from your private safe?"

"Everybody knows that who has read the papers."

"And it is settled, or nearly so, that the gems were taken by your stenographer, Miss Cummings?"

"That is true."

Vanderbeck seemed a little more at his ease and settled back in his chair.

"Are you sure that on the night the gems disappeared you locked the safe?"

Vanderbeck frowned.

"Do you think, sir, that I would leave that amount of riches at the call of any one who chose to take them for the trouble of swinging a safe door?"

"Was Miss Cummings in the office at night?"

"Usually her duties ended at six."

"And you dismissed her and locked the safe for the day?"

"Yes."

"You showed Miss Cummings the gems, did you not?"

"Yes, she saw them."

"And knew to whom they belonged?"

"Yes. It was no secret."

"Now, Mr. Vanderbeck, you have not thought that perhaps the girl is innocent?"

"I don't see how she could be."

"No? You don't see how any person but Miss Cummings could have taken the jewels?"

Vanderbeck shook his head.

Suddenly Salmon Search shifted his gaze from the man to the paper that lay open on the table.

"You've read the news?" said he.

"I see that Mrs Wellington has been murdered."

"Of course you have read the particulars."

"No. I was just coming to that when you came in."

"She was robbed as well as murdered."

"You don't tell me?" exclaimed Vanderbeck.

"Yes, it was robbery as well as the greater crime. Eudora Wellington held a secret."

"Indeed?"

"She was a strange woman. Her husband once traveled all over the world—"

"I believe he told me something of his travels."

"You have been somewhat of a traveler, Mr. Vanderbeck?"

"A little," uneasily said the Gold Wolf.

"Were you ever in Italy?"

"I passed through it."

"Never stopped in Naples?"

"A week, I believe, at The Roman."

"Yes."

"It never struck me," Vanderbeck went on.

"You rather enjoyed yourself there for all," said Salmon Search. "I believe you had an 'affair' there."

"Sir?"

"A little love affair. That was years ago and you were old enough to have sown your wild oats."

"I don't see what all this is drifting to," said the banker. "I have other business of importance this morning——"

"We'll transact it here," was the cool reply. "You married in Naples."

"What if I did?"

"You had a gay time while there and you did not come back to America till after your child was born."

There was not a single vestige of color on the banker's face.

"I will not submit to this!" he exclaimed, "and in my own house, too."

Salmon Search put one hand on the edge of the table and looked into Vanderbeck's face.

"You are a widower now?" he said in lower tones.

There was no reply.

"You have added to your wealth in late years. You are called the Gold Wolf."

The semblance of a smile came to Vanderbeck's mouth.

"What are you driving at?" he cried. "In the name of Heaven, man, why all this inquisition?"

"Since you are a little impatient, I'll come to it without further ceremony. You murdered your wife in Italy."

"It is false! I did not touch her. She threw herself from a cliff and that was the end of an unhappy life."

"But you drove her to it. You and one Donnixetti, alias Roberti, a bravo hired by you to first blast your wife's reputation and then——"

"See here," roared Vanderbeck as he leaned across the table with a deathly pallor on his face tensely drawn, "you've been hired by some fiend to tell me this. You've been deceived——"

"No. Your son——"

"I have no son. My unfortunate wife first threw the babe over the edge of the cliff and then took the plunge herself."

Salmon Search laughed.

"Poor fool!" said he as the smile lingered. "Lloyd Vanderbeck, your son is almost within call."

In an instant the banker was on his feet and his gaze became riveted upon the cool man across the table.

"What do you want for all this?" he exclaimed. "What is your demand?"

"The truth!"

"About the Italian fiasco?"

"No, about the Wellington jewels."

"I've told that."

"You've lied. You know that Miss Cummings did not take them."

"I—I —"

"You will not tell the truth?" broke in the detective.

"I've told it."

Salmon Search rose slowly to his feet and then stood in the middle of the room.

"Liar! murderer! perjurer!" came slowly over his lips in burning accents. "You will not save the innocent. Then take the consequences."

"What are you going to do?" and Vanderbeck was on his feet with a revolver in his hand. "Stand where you are!" he went on. "A movement and you are a dead man."

The detective simply looked into the muzzle of the weapon and then caught the eye of the desperate man.

"I'm no fool, Lloyd Vanderbeck. There is a certain memorandum in my desk. It tells that I came to your house this morning and why. If I am killed here the whole story will be known—the Italian crime and all."

Vanderbeck looked at the cool man another moment and the weapon dropped unexploded to the table.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CLUTCH OF MEAVE.

Meantime Paul Partland had been released and the hunt for Vestal was resumed.

The young man hoped to find the young girl's trail, but the hours wore away and the attainment of his desires seemed as far off as ever.

Vestal, shut up in the house on Victor street with Meave for a jaileress, pined for freedom. She had been balked in her desire to tell the story of her innocence at police headquarters and now she did not know what would be the next thing to take place in her exciting history.

It was the next day after her incarceration in the old house by Park Knowles that Meave, who at times showed signs of having a soul, brought the young girl a newspaper.

It contained an account of the now exciting topic, the strange death of Mrs. Wellington.

Vestal uttered a cry the moment her gaze found the thrilling story.

"What is it that excites you?" asked Meave.

Vestal explained.

"I say," said the housekeeper, "isn't that the woman who lost some jewels a few days ago?"

"The same, and do you know, Meave, that I am the person who is charged with the theft?"

"You, missy? You, my little peach blossom? Why, you look as though sugar wouldn't melt in your mouth."

"Maybe it wouldn't, Meave. You don't think I would take a lot of jewelry?"

"I wouldn't have thought it. Does my employer believe that?"

"He professes to. But down in his heart Park Knowles knows that I never took one of those gems—"

"Park Knowles? Is that his name?"

"Yes. What is he to you?"

"He is Michael Starr."

"Oh!" exclaimed Vestal. "Then he sails under several names as suits his fancy."

"Yes," continued Meave. "He has long been Michael Starr to me."

"He is the scion of one of the wealthiest houses in this city. He is the black sheep of the flock——"

"Oh, I don't doubt that," interrupted Meave. "But he's a nice gentleman for all."

Vestal crossed the room and would have gone to the window had not Meave gently pulled her back.

"I've got my orders," said the woman. "Don't try me, please."

Vestal turned upon her jaileress and for a moment the twain stood face to face without speaking.

"Do you know Madame Zenobia?" suddenly asked Vestal.

"I know the seeress," confessed Meave, "I guess all of us know her. But why do you ask, girl?"

"She is my friend."

"And mine, too," exclaimed the housekeeper. "I have been with her, but not for some time."

"You mean that you have lived with Zenobia?"

"That's it. I have been her help."

"I was on my road from her house on an important errand when I fell into the hands of the man known as Michael Starr."

"Indeed? And how is my old friend Zenobia?"

"She was well."

"Did you ever hear her mention one Dolly?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm Dolly. But now I'm Meave, you see, and quite another person. I would sooner be back with Madame Zenobia than here."

"I should think you would," responded Vestal. "You are serving a hard taskmaster now."

"But when one is oathbound——"

"As you are, no doubt?"

"Terribly oathbound," said Meave. "You do not know how I came to fall into the power of Michael Starr."

"You need not tell me if you prefer it to remain a secret," was the reply. "I will not insist."

"Thank you," said Meave. "You are very kind."

In another moment Vestal crossed the room and laid her hands on Meave's shoulders.

"You are like myself, in the power of this man," said she. "It is no sin to free ourselves."

"But the oath!" cried Meave.

"It was no doubt taken under duress," resumed the pretty stenographer. "To break such an oath is no sin. I must escape from this house for the purpose of establishing my innocence and clearing my name. I am innocent. I know, or think I do, who took the Wellington jewels. I can prove my innocence."

"I believe you can, for you don't look like a thief."

"Thank you," said Vestal gratefully. "You need not see me quit the house."

"No! no! I dare not," was the quick reply. "I believe you innocent and all that, yet I dare not betray Michael Starr."

"But he will shake you when you have served his purpose."

"Perhaps. You see, miss, I am as full of sin as a tick is of fleas——"

"But you can be better. You——"

"Never mind! You can't make me a traitress. I am here to carry out his orders and they are to take your life if you attempt to escape."

"Would you do that?"

"Why not? It would be within the bounds of the oath."

Vestal's blood coursed hot, a lava tide, through her veins.

She wanted her freedom above everything else, and she drew back a pace as she measured the distance between her and the mistress of the place.

"It is now or never," said the girl to herself. "If I remain here longer I shall go mad."

The next second she launched herself across the space and her hands found Meave's throat.

The two women went up against the nearest wall and Vestal discovered that she had attacked a veritable tigress.

Meave had the power of a wild beast and her hands broke Vestal's grip and the young girl was borne across the apartment with the fingers of Meave at her own trachea.

She could not cry, for the mad fingers of the woman prevented, and she gave herself up for lost.

Poor Vestal! After all, her life was to end in the shadow that followed her of late with such terrible persistency.

Meave would not spare her. She was still the oathbound slave of Park Knowles, alias Michael Starr, and not for the world would she loosen her grip on Vestal's throat.

The room suddenly grew dark to the pretty stenographer, her blood seemed to turn to ice and she glided into that unconsciousness which so often precedes by a span the endless slumber of death.

And Meave still held her grip while her eyes seemed to emit flashing sparks of fire.

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This is the tale of a ghost that eats, and it has thrown the towns of the Siangfu district of China into a commotion. The facts are related in the North China Herald. On March 27 the 30-year-old son of Tzi Lung, a school teacher, was thought to have died of typhus fever. His family being very poor, the body was placed in a frail wood coffin and buried only a few inches under the soil outside the western gate of the town of Siangyang. On April 6 a man put his horse to graze on the spot. The beast found good grass near the grave and brought its foot down upon the soil above the coffin, the lid of which was broken. In a little while the owner of the horse saw a gaunt white arm thrust up through the hole made by the horse's hoof.

Thinking the dead man's ghost was about to rise to avenge the insult offered in the breaking of the coffin, the watcher hurried up and began shoveling earth into the hole to keep the ghost down. A muffled voice expostulated and begged to be freed, claiming to be the living son of Tzi Lung. The watcher fled in terror to the town, where he told every one he met of what had happened. The ghost's father urged that the ghost should be let alone and not further disturbed.

A large crowd, however, went out of the city to view the wonder. The ghost kept begging most piteously to be let out. One man had courage enough to unearth the cover of the coffin completely and open it, allowing the "resurrected" man to sit up. Rice soup and wine were brought and ravenously devoured by the ghost, still sitting upright in his coffin imbedded in the earth.

Finally the unhappy spirit was released and confined in a temple until he could prove himself to be a living man.

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"Is this El Paso?"

"No, sir," replied the trainman; "it is not El Paso. It is a cow."

When the cow had been removed from the line the train ambled on again, but two minutes later it again came to a dead stop.

"Another cow, I suppose," shouted the irate passenger witheringly.

"No, sir, it is not," was the quiet response. "It is the same cow."

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CHAPTER IV.

COUNTERFEITERS' RENDEZVOUS.

He reached one of the windows and looked in.

To his surprise, there was only one person in the room—a rough-looknig fellow, who sat tilted back on a chair, smoking a pipe.

The man that Ben had followed had disappeared.

There was a door at the farther side of the room, and it undoubtedly opened into another room.

"There is where he has gone," was Ben's thought.

He made his way around to the left-hand end of the cabin, and was disappointed there, for there was no window.

"Likely there is one in the other end, however," was the boy's thought, and he made his way around there—only to find that he was mistaken. There was no window there, either

The cabin, he could make out now, was longer from the front to the back than it was the other way, and the rear was built close up against a bluff some fifteen or twenty feet high.

Ben was eager to find out what was going on in the room, or to hear what was being said, but how was he to do it?

He dared not try to enter the front room, for the man in there would see him, and there was no way of entering the rear room, save through the front one, seemingly.

Ben thought it over.

"Likely it is [illegible] of clapboards," was his thought, "and in that case, if I could get up there, I might be able to hear what was said in the room below, or even to pull off some boards and climb down into the loft. I'll see if I can get to the roof."

The only possible way to reach the roof, Ben figured, was by climbing to the top of the bluff and letting himself down onto the roof from above.

He decided to try this plan, at any rate.

Ben was a boy of action, and when he made up his mind to do a thing he never put it off. "Do it now" was his motto, and he at once began climbing the bluff, which was not perpendicular, but was quite steep.

Nevertheless, to an active youth like Ben it was not such a difficult matter to reach the top, and then he moved across till directly above the point where the cabin set against the bluff. Here he lay down on his stomach and looked down, trying to estimate the distance to the roof.

There was a small tree, a mere sapling, growing close to the edge of the bluff, and Ben took hold of this sapling, and then worked his body around and lowered it slowly and carefully, feeling with his feet as he did so.

Presently his feet touched something, and after feeling about for a few moments Ben decided that his feet had come in contact with the top of a rude stone chimney.

He was glad of this, as he felt it would be possible for him to get a firm footing on the top of the chimney and then step down onto the roof.

He felt around till he got his feet planted to his satisfaction, and then he let go his hold of the sapling. He stood there, balancing himself for a few moments, and then slowly stooped down, with the intention of getting hold with his hands and then afterward getting down on his knees, this to be followed by stepping onto the roof.

The stones that constituted the chimney were loose, however, and the one under his left foot suddenly gave way and went clattering down the chimney. Of course Ben's foot slipped off the top and followed the stone, and he lost his balance and fell, and as the chimney was a wide one, he went down inside it.

He tried to catch hold of the stones that projected on the inside of the chimney, but failed, and the result was that he landed in the room below very quickly and with considerable force, sending ashes flying in all directions and getting some up his nose, causing him to sneeze two or three times, but in a muffled manner, as he was well back within the fireplace, which was a huge one.

When Ben got the ashes out of his eyes and looked about him, he saw, to his surprise, that there was no one in the room.

He stepped out into the room and looked about him in surprise.

Where was the man he had followed to this place?

Then the thought occurred to him that the man probably had gone back into the front room while he (Ben) was climbing the bluff and getting down onto the top of the chimney

Ben listened, being fearful that his descent had made noise enough to be heard in the other room, but all was quiet in there.

He stepped to the door and listened. He could hear no sound of voices in conversation. If more than one man was in there they were keeping very quiet.

Ben had a number of bruises on his arms, legs and body where he had struck against the projecting stones coming down the chimney, but fortunately none of them were serious.

Ben turned and looked about the room, and to his surprise he saw a door in the rear wall beside the fireplace.

He stared in wonder

What could it mean? The house stood right against the bluff; then why should a door be there?

Suddenly the thought came to him that possibly there was a cave in the face of the bluff, and that the door opened into it.

This struck him as being a very likely supposition

"If this is the headquarters of a gang of burglars and counterfeiters," thought the youth, "then it is likely that there is a cave there; and who knows?—there may be a dozen of the rascals in there, even now, holding a consultation and planning new work!"

The thought was an exciting one. Ben felt that he would give a good deal to know what was going on behind that door.

"I wonder if it is locked?" was his mental query.

He tiptoed across the room and laid his hand on the knob.

Here he paused and stood hesitating. The idea had just struck him that he was in great danger, if indeed he was in the rendezvous of a band of burglars and counterfeiters.

"They would not hesitate to put me out of the way to protect themselves," was his thought.

He stood there perhaps a minute, and then, feeling that he was in danger anyway, and might as well see the thing through, he turned the knob gently and pulled.

The door came open to his touch. It was not locked.

He opened it perhaps three inches and looked through.

All was dark beyond.

Ben drew a breath of relief and listened.

From somewhere, back in the darkness came a sort of grating sound, with an occasional thump, muffled, as if quite a distance away, or else behind heavy doors.

Ben listened a while, pondered, and presently decided that there must be a passage of some kind, and that at the end of the passage would be found another door, which undoubtedly opened into the cave proper.

He turned and glanced at the door opening into the other room, listened a few moments, heard nothing, and then stepped through into the passage and pulled the door to behind him

Again he stood still and listened. Now that he was in the passageway, with the door shut, he could hear the sounds plainer than before.

After listening a few moments, he moved slowly and cautiously along, feeling his way.

The passageway was only about three feet wide, and so he had no difficulty in touching both walls with his hands.

He went perhaps twenty feet, and then came up against what seemed like a wall. On feeling cautiously, however, he found that it was a door, though a heavy one, made of heavy slabs.

He felt around till he found the latch, a huge wooden affair, and he lifted it carefully and pulled, but the door refused to open.

It was fastened on the other side in some manner.

There was a small hole through the door, through which ran the string with which the latch was lifted from the other side, and Ben stooped and looked through this hole.

He could not see what it was that was making the grating noise, or the thumping sound, but he got a view of perhaps half a dozen men, who were seated at a table in the middle of the room, talking and drinking and smoking.

They were well-dressed, but villianous-looking, and the youth realized that if he were to fall into their hands he might suffer.

While he was gazing he saw a man in his shirt-sleeves approach the end of the table and place something before one of the men. Ben recognized this man as the one who had been talking to the man he had followed, and who had come on ahead.

This man lifted the object and examined it, and Ben saw that it was a bank bill.

Then he understood what caused the grating sound and the thumping.

These fellows had a printing press in there, and were engaged in printing counterfeit notes.

"That's it, sure as shooting!" thought Ben. "Well, I have found out where the burglars and counterfeiters have their headquarters, and now if I can get out and back to Washington it will be a big feather in my cap"

But could he get out and away without being discovered?

That was the question!

CHAPTER V

BEN SPIES ON THE COUNTERFEITERS.

Ben made his way back along the passage and passed through the door and into the room beyond.

He closed the door and then looked around him.

How was he to get out?

This was a difficult question to answer.

If he tried to get out through the front room the rough-looking man he had seen there would undoubtedly capture him. Ben realized now that this man was a guard, and that his sole business was to stay there in the front room and throw any one who might put in an appearance off their guard.

There was only one possible way to get out and that was by way of the chimney.

Ben, as soon as he had come to this conclusion, made his way into the fireplace and reached up and felt around.

Ben's motto was to not delay, but to do anything that had to be done, at once.

He reached up, took good holds and pulled himself up as high as possible, after which he held on with his right hand and reached higher with his left and got a new hold.

Then he pulled himself up with his left hand and got a new hold with his right.

It was nerve-racking work, but Ben persevered and presently succeeded in getting his feet on the ends of outjutting rocks.

Then he paused and stood there, resting.

Suddenly he heard a door open, followed quickly by footsteps in the room, and voices.

Ben recognized the voices as being those of the two men he had seen in Washington.

"That twenty-dollar note is going to be a fine one, Johnson," said one of the men.

"Yes, the engraver certainly did a good job on the plate," was the reply.

"It is perfect, it seems to me."

"Yes, I could find no flaws even with a microscope."

"No, and with the paper with silk threads in it, the note will be absolutely perfect."

"Yes, I think it will defy detection."

The men had paused and Ben heard the sound of a match being scratched, after which he smelled cigar smoke.

The youth was filled with trepidation.

What if they should notice the loose stone that lay in the ashes in the fireplace?

In case they were to notice it, they might look up into the chimney, in which case he would be discovered without doubt.

He almost held his breath.

He heard the two puff at the cigars a few moments, and then one said:

"Chief Blakely is working hard to run us to earth, Edwards"

"Yes, but little good will it do him."

"True, I fancy he won't learn where we are"

"Not unless some of the men should be very careless"

"Which is not likely to happen."

"No; we have not a man among us who cannot be trusted."

"No."

"And they are sober and discreet."

"So they are"

At this moment a bit of mud from between two of the rocks of the chimney, loosened by Ben's foot, dropped and made a slight noise which the two men noticed.

"What was that?" exclaimed one

"A bit of mortar from out the chimney," replied the other.

Ben's heart was in his mouth.

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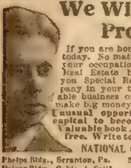

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What if they should look up the chimney!

"The chimney is a rude affair," said the other man; "it will likely come down with a rush one of these days."

"Likely, but I hope it will hold up long enough for our purposes."

"I guess it will. Well, let's be going."

Ben breathed easier. He felt that he was safe now.

He heard the men walk across the floor, and one gave three raps on the door. Then followed a creaking as the door opened, and the footsteps passed out of the room, and the door creaked again.

Ben breathed more freely than ever, for the present at least he was in no danger of discovery.

He at once began climbing up on the inside of the chimney.

Slowly he made his way upward and presently he reached the top.

He climbed out on the edge of the chimney, and then slowly and cautiously let himself down onto the roof.

He worked his way down to the edge of the roof and then leaped to the ground. It was so dark he could not see the ground, and so had to take his chances of striking in a soft place. He was fortunate, for he was not injured, though he struck the ground pretty hard.

He fell to his hand and knees, but was up again in a jiffy, and stole away in the darkness. As he did so, he heard the door of the cabin open and the sound of voices.

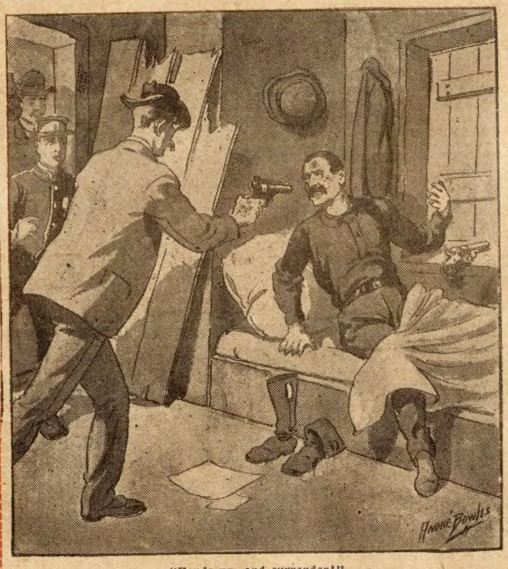
The two men were leaving.

"Phew! I was just in time!" thought Ben. "If I had been half a minute later they would have heard me when I jumped off the roof."

Ben moved through the timber as swiftly as possible and presently reached the road.

Fifty yards distant gleamed the lamps on the sides of the cab.

Ben made a detour and approached the cab from the rear. He did not go nearer than twenty feet, just then, however. He was afraid the cab driver might hear him.



"Hands up, and surrender!"

He had been there but a few minutes when he heard the sound of footsteps and voices.

"They're comin'," he heard the cab driver mutter; "well, I'm glad of that. We'll be back in town by one o'clock."

The cabman climbed out of the cab, stretched himself and then stepped aside as the two men approached, and held the door open for them to enter, which they did, the one who had hired him remarking:

"Did you get tired waiting for me?"

"No; I was takin' it easy on the cushions, sir."

"That's so. Well, get us back to the Willard House as quick as you know how."

"All right, sir."

The two climbed into the cab, the door clanged shut, the cabman climbed to his seat and took up the lines, and the cab moved off down the road at a lively rate.

And hanging on behind was Ben Bolton, the messenger boy, feeling pretty well pleased with his work.

He had stumbled upon a couple of the counterfeiters by accident, and had followed one of them, and had thus discovered their headquarters.

"Now to go to the chief of the secret service and tell him what I have discovered!" thought Ben.

About a block from the Willard Hotel Ben dropped off the cab and stepped across to the sidewalk. He paused and waited till he saw the two men alight and enter the hotel and the cab go rattling away, and then he hastened to the building where the chief of the secret service had his headquarters.

Ben did not know whether the offices were open at this hour or not, but he decided to go and see, anyhow.

He was soon knocking on the door, and a sleepy voice called out:

"Come in."

Ben opened the door and entered.

There was only one person in the room—a young fellow of perhaps twenty-one years of age.

He was sitting in one chair, with his feet on another, and looked angrily at Ben and asked curtly:

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to see the chief," replied Ben.

The young man laughed sneeringly.

"Did you expect to find him here at this time of night?" he asked.

"No, I didn't," replied Ben with some spirit, "but I want to know where he lives, so I can go and see him."

Again the young man laughed, more sneeringly than before, if that were possible.

"You want to see the chief at this time of night—you, a mere kid?" he cried.

"Yes, I have important business with him."

"Yes you have—I don't believe!" with an insulting laugh.

"It is true. Kindly give me his address, so I can go there at once."

"Hardly! It would be as much as my place is worth. Tell me what your business with him is, and I will tell him about it, when he comes in the morning."

"My business with him is private."

The young man looked at Ben a few moments, and then said:

"Have you a telegram for him?"

Ben shook his head.

"No, I haven't. I am on the day shift, and this business that I wish to see him about is not connected with my work at the A. D. T. headquarters."

"Well, you'll have to wait till morning to see him."

"But," protested Ben, "this is very important business. I must see him tonight!"

"Bosh! Tomorrow will do as well, for any business that a youngster like you can have with him. He would give me my walking papers if I were to give you his address and you were to go and get him out of bed at this time of night."

"You'll get your walking papers tomorrow, if you don't give me his address," said Ben, grimly.

The young man snapped his fingers.

"Bosh!" he sneered. "Get out, youngster, and let me go back to sleep."

Ben did not want to give up. He had important information for the chief, and he wanted to give it to him. He wanted to "do it now." He did not believe in putting off. He knew that if he could get to see the chief and tell him what he had learned, the chief would be only too glad that the youth had come to him, even at this unusual hour of the night.

"You had better tell me where the chief lives," said Ben.

"Get out, I tell you!"

"I have important information for the chief."

"Tell it to me, and let me judge. If I think that you are right about it I'll go with you to the chief's home."

But Ben shook his head. He did not intend to tell this impudent young man what he had learned, and have him at once go to the chief and play the leading part, and undoubtedly try to take the credit to himself.

"I'll wait till tomorrow," thought the youth. "The counterfeiters don't suspect that their headquarters are known, so they will stay there, and by waitnig, there will be no danger of letting the rascals escape. If there was danger of this I would tell this fellow what I have learned, but there isn't, and I'll wait till tomorrow and probably the chief will tell him what he thinks of him. I hope that he will do so."

Then aloud Ben said:

"What time does the chief get here, mornings?"

"Half-past nine."

"All right; I'll come in the morning."

"Shut the door as you go out," drawled the young man, and Ben did shut it—with a slam.

When he got down on the street Ben gave utterance to an exclamation:

"Why didn't I think of that sooner? I can find the chief's address by looking in a directory. Here's an all-night drug store; I'll go in there. I'll see the chief yet, in spite of that smart young man!"

He entered the drug store, consulted the directory, found the address, and a minute later was hastening away in the direction of the home of the chief of the secret service.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

Half an hour later Ben was seated in the library at the home of the chief of the secret service, and the chief himself was seated on the other side of the library table.

"Now, my boy, what is it?" he asked.

Ben had secured entrance through telling the servant who answered his ring, that he wanted to see the chief on imperative business.

"I have important information for you, sir," was the reply.

"Very good; I am glad of that. What is it?"

"I have discovered the headquarters of that band of burglars and counterfeiters that has been giving you so much trouble, sir."

The chief started, and gazed at Ben keenly.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"I know where their rendezvous is, sir," nodding.

The chief looked eager, but skeptical.

"What makes you think that?" he asked.

"I don't think it, sir; I know it," was the quiet reply.

"How do you know it?" with a quiet smile.

"Because I have been in their rendezvous tonight, sir."

The chief started and stared at the boy unbelievingly.

"You have been in their rendezvous tonight?" he exclaimed. "Impossible!"

"It is true, sir. I have come from there within the last hour and a half."

There was such an air of confidennce about Ben, and he spoke so positively that the chief was impressed.

"Can it be possible that this boy has stumbled upon the hiding-place of that band of burglars and counterfeiters?" he asked himself. Aloud he said:

"Tell me all about it, Ben." The youth had given his name to the servant when he first entered the house.

"Very well, sir." And then Ben told the whole story, though shortening it considerably where he was speaking of his own doings.

The chief was excited and deeply interested as he heard the boy's story, and when Ben got through, he exclaimed:

"My boy, I believe that you have succeeded in doing what the entire secret service force has been unable to do!"

"Well, sir, I am positive that I have found the rendezvous of the gang, at any rate."

"And so am I. And we will go and capture the scoundrels this very night. I will communicate with the office by telephone and order my man there to arouse the entire force. You must stay here and guide us to the counterfeiters' rendezvous."

"How long will it be before you will be ready to start, sir?"

"Oh, say three-quarters of an hour."

"Then, if you please, sir, I will run home and tell my mother and sister what has kept me away from home, and what I am going to do. I am afraid that they have been greatly worried about me."

"Very good. Run along, but get back to headquarters as quickly as possible."

"I will, sir."

Ben took his leave and the chief hastened to the telephone and called up the young man in the office. When that worthy received peremptory orders to arouse the entire force at once he almost emitted a whistle of amazement into the mouth of the 'phone.

"Great guns! I wonder if that kid went to the chief, after all, and if his business really was important!" was his mental query.

"All right, sir; I'll have them all out in a jiffy," he replied to the chief.

Ben hastened to his home and found his mother sitting up, and with them was Lucy Mayberry. They were pale and had evidently been greatly alarmed over the unexplained absence of Ben from his home.

"Oh, where have you been?" was their cry, in unison, the moment the youth opened the door.

"Been having adventures," was the smiling reply. "I'll tell you all about it tomorrow, but now I haven't much time to spare." He kissed his mother and sister, and then, as Lucy looked mischievously up at him, he gave her a kiss, too.

"Impudence!" Lucy cried, giving his ear a cuff. But she didn't hit very hard.

Then Ben explained briefly, and his hearers gave utterance to exclamations of amazement.

"Why, you might have been killed, Ben!" said his mother.

"You certainly were in danger, brother!" from Alice.

"Goodness, you ought not to have ventured down that chimney!" said Lucy.

"I didn't 'venture' down; I fell down," grinned Ben.

The three laughed. They could do so now that they knew Ben was alive and well.

"I must go," he said. "I simply ran home to tell you what had delayed me."

"Oh, do you think you will capture the counterfeiters?" exclaimed Lucy.

"I don't see how we can fail," said Ben. "You see, they do not suspect that their headquarters is known to anyone other than themselves, and we will be able to take them by surprise."

"That will be a big feather in your cap, won't it, Ben?" cried his sister.

"Yes, sis."

"You'll get a reward, likely," from Lucy.

"Possibly."

"I think you ought to have a reward, Ben," said his mother, "for you certainly risked your life in venturing into the rendezvous of the burglars and counterfeiters."

"I guess I did, mother, and I think that I will receive a reward if the villains are captured."

"You must be careful, Ben, and not get hurt!" said his sister.

"Yes, be careful, my son! You have done enough as it is, and so stay back and let the police officers do the fighting if there is any to be done."

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"I don't think there will be any fighting," said Ben. "We are going to take an overwhelming force and if they try to resist it will be a bad thing for them."

"Well, be careful. Those are desperate men, doubtless, and there is no knowing what they might do."

"I'll be careful. Well, I must be going now. I'll be back in time for breakfast, likely."

He kissed his mother and sister, snatched another kiss from Lucy, and dashed out of the room and house and on up the street.

Ten minutes later he was at secret service headquarters and found the entire force there, the chief having just arrived.

"Ah, here you are, Ben!" exclaimed the chief. "Good! We'll be off as soon as the cabs arrive."

The young man who had refused to tell Ben where the chief lived was there, looking foolish and disconcerted whenever he caught Ben's eye. He realized that he had made a great blunder, and felt certain that he would be discharged just as soon as this business had been finished.

"What about the two men at the Willard, sir?" asked Ben.

"We will get them after we come back. They are doubtless in bed sound asleep and not dreaming that they are in danger, so there is no hurry about getting them."

The cabs arrived presently, and the twenty secret service officers went down and climbed in. The chief was in the first one, and Ben got up beside the driver to tell him which way to go and guide him to the vicinity of the rendezvous of the counterfeiters.

On rolled the five cabs for nearly an hour and then Ben gave the word halt.

This was done and the secret service officers alighted and looked to their weapons.

"How far is it to the rendezvous?" the chief asked Ben.

"About three-quarters of a mile."

"Very good; lead the way and we will follow. Come along, men."

Ben led the way through the timber, and in about twenty minutes they came out in the open ground, at the farther side of which stood the cabin. The moon was just rising, and the cabin could be seen distinctly. There was no light shining through the windows this time.

"Make a half-circle around the cabin, from bluff to bluff," ordered the chief, and this was done.

Then, acting under instructions, four of the men took up a log of wood, and, using it as a battering-ram, rushed forward and burst the door open.

The chief opened his dark-lantern and flashed the light into the cabin as he leaped through the doorway, and in his other hand was a revolver. After him came half a dozen of the officers.

A rough-looking man, just aroused from sleep, evidently, leaped out of a bunk in one corner and groped for a weapon.

"Hands up and surrender!" cried the chief, leveling the revolver.

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A MESSAGE FOR THE CZAR.

BY STEWART OWEN.

"Landlord, can I have a sled from here to convey me to the nearest railway station?"

The speaker was a man of somewhat severe and forbidding aspect, who had just entered the inn of a Russian village.

"I fear not, sir," said the landlord.

"Why? Didn't I see a good-sized sled in the yard as I came in, all ready for a journey?"

"Yes," said the landlord, "and it is going the right way for the railway, but it is engaged."

"Then surely whoever has engaged it can find room for me?" inquired the stranger.

The landlord smiled.

"I fear no one would be welcome," said he. "The fact is, young Ivan Dobroff—a young man well known here—has secured it to take him and his bride, and a stranger might not be welcome."

"Pshaw! They will want a driver in any case, and surely sleighing along these roads does not offer much chance for lovers' conversation. They might find room for me."

"Well, you can ask them," said the landlord. "Come this way. He led the way along a narrow passage and knocked at a door. Almost before there was any time for response, he threw it open, and the stranger entered.

A young man and a young woman were in the room, and they looked round when the door was opened.

The stranger made a bow that would have done credit to a Frenchman, and his first words were suggestive of French influence.

"A thousand pardons for this intrusion, but I desire to ask a favor. It is of the utmost importance that I shall reach the railway without any delay, and there only appears to be the sled you have hired available for the journey. Can you find room for me?"

The bridegroom looked doubtful, and the bride flashed a glance at him which plainly meant a negative. The stranger read the meaning in an instant, and before the young man had time to answer he shut the door on the landlord, who was lingering near, and, advancing into the room, he said in a low tone:

"I will explain the urgency of the case. As you may know, there is an important state ceremony in Moscow in three days' time, and at all costs I must be there. I am the bearer of a message for the Czar, and I must deliver it in person."

The young man sprang to his feet and saluted.

"In that case, sir, our sled is at your service. We thought of starting in an hour. Will that be convenient?"

"I will be ready," said the stranger, as he withdrew. "Breathe not a word of the secret I have entrusted to you."

So it came to pass that four human beings drawn by two horses started out on their journey an hour later. The stranger brought nothing with him except a small hand-bag, presumably holding his dispatches, for he carried it in his hand all the time. He sat silent at the rear of the sled while the young people conversed as well as the condition of the road would allow.

After they had covered a number of miles they came to a very wild and forsaken part of the country, where a mere track served as a road through snow-covered desolation. At some distance to the right of the road there stretched a forest the edge of which made an abrupt line of dark hue against the whiteness of the snow-covered ground. It seemed as if nature had schemed to give an effect of utter desolation.

Even the young bride and bridegroom shared in the depression, for they became silent as the sled reached this part, and watched the frowning edge of the forest, without finding any inspiration for a continuance of their conversation.

Then suddenly from somewhere out of the depths of the wood there came a sharp, shrill, and menacing sound, and instantly the horses plunged with such violence as to almost unseat the occupants of the sled.

Then they settled down to run at a greatly increased pace.

"What was that, Ivan?" said the girl, clasping her husband's arm. "Was it the cry of a wolf?"

"Yes," he replied. "It is surprising that any wolves should be so near us as this, but the severe weather may have driven a few farther this way than usual. But have no fear. There will not be many. Not enough to——"

As if to mock his words, he was interrupted by a repetition of the sound, but this time with the answer of a chorus. Again the horses plunged, and the driver applied his whip. There was no need for whip, however. The animals knew the danger that was near, and they broke into a gallop, which made it difficult for the occupants of the sled to keep their seats.

A few seconds of tense silence followed, and they could see a dark patch coming out from the forest at their side, and spreading out from the line of trees like a quantity of spilled ink. It grew larger and larger, and then separated from the trees and came hastening toward them over the snow.

Ivan drew his breath with a sharp, hissing sound. He knew what that dark patch meant, and he could see how terrible was the danger which threatened.

It was a large pack of wolves, evidently forced away from their usual quarters by extremes of hunger, and, coming from the side, as they did, almost able to cut off the sled as it went on its course.

Soon the ominous dark patch began to take definite shape. Something of the form of the wolves could be discerned, and their numbers estimated. Ivan reached down to the bottom of the sled, and then suddenly drew himself up with a half-suppressed cry of dismay.

"What is it," asked the girl quickly.

For a few seconds he did not answer, and then, as she insisted, he replied:

"I have not brought my gun. I am unarmed."

For a few more seconds he stared hopelessly at the approaching wolves, and then, rousing himself on as if with an effort, he touched the stranger on the arm.

"Sir," he shouted, for it was necessary to shout, with the wind whistling round their ears, and the sound of sled and hoofs—"are you armed? Have you revolver or pistol with you?"

The stranger looked at him with something very much like a smile.

"No, sir," he replied. "Like the majority of my unhappy countrymen, I am unarmed."

The wolves almost cut them off. They reached the track at a point the sled had left only a few seconds before, and as they fell in behind to continue the chase the full horror of the situation was evident to the fugitives. They could plainly see those hideous, hungry ghouls, those gaunt forms, those cruel eyes, and, above all, the awful look of determination, as if they were absolutely certain of their prey, however long the chase might be.

The horses were straining themselves to the utmost, and for a while it seemed that the wolves gained very little; but Ivan saw no hope of escape. He knew the staying power of wolves, and he knew that the horses could not possibly maintain their speed. The wolves were in such numbers that even a gun would have been of little value, and he was absolutely unarmed.

Worse still, he knew that little more than a mile ahead there was a long hill, which would inevitably check the speed of the horses, strain how they might, and that would be the end.

It seemed a long time before the end was reached, although in reality it was only a few minutes. The sled slackened its speed as the hill was reached, and simultaneously there seemed to be a movement throughout the pack of wolves, as if they knew that the prey was theirs. Rapidly they drew nearer their final rush.

Then for the first time the stranger, who had been regarding the enemy with the same kind of half-smile with which he had answered Ivan's question, roused himself up. He glanced ahead at the long slope in front of them, and then called out sharply:

"Driver, is there any chance of our escaping?"

There was no reply. Either the driver did not hear, or he was too terrified to understand the question.

"Driver," called the stranger, more impertatively, "do you hear me? Is there any chance of our escaping?"

The driver cast a frightened glance over his shoulder, and said: "No. Heaven help us! There is none."

"Then I will save you on one condition," said the stranger. "Do you hear me, all of you? I will save you on one condition. You must swear to me by the most sacred oath you know never to tell any one how I do it. Will you swear? Swear that you will tell no one how I saved you. Be quick! There is no time to waste."

"I swear!" said the driver, but hardly knowing what he said.

As if in a dream the young man and his bride repeated the words, "I swear!"

In a moment the stranger unfastened his handbag, and drew from thence a spherical object, the size of a cricket-ball.

"Lean right forward," he shouted. "Keep down as low as possible. Now for a test."

With the last words he threw the ball of steel into the midst of the oncoming wolves.

There was a vivid flash, a deafening report, and the animals were hurled in every direction, as if some demoniacal force had been let loose among them.

Some were blown to pieces, many were killed, and still more wounded by that awful explosion. Closely packed as they were, a large number had come within the death-dealing circle. Those that were unhurt stopped for a moment, as if stunned by the force of the enemy which had attacked them. Then the instinct of hunger triumphed and, after the manner of their kind, they fell furiously on the dead and the wounded.

The sled reached the top of the hill, and quickened its pace as it began the descent. The horses still did their best, and the driver urged them on for some time before he realized that the chase had been abandoned.

The young girl was gazing back in the direction whence they had come, half-dazed by the terror through which she had passed. It all seemed like a dream to her, until she was suddenly aroused by the stranger. He did not say a word, but he seemed to be leaning upon her more and more heavily, until at last his head was almost pillowed on her lap.

Then, as she caught sight of the deadly pallor of his face, she instantly divined the truth.

"You are hurt!" she exclaimed, bending over him.

"Yes," he gasped faintly; "our deliverer struck back at me."

"Courage!" said Ivan, trying to raise him to a more comfortable position. "We will soon have help for you."

"It is useless," said the stranger, still more faintly. "Pain has gone, and I shall be dead in a few minutes."

There was silence for a short time, and as they watched the face of the stricken man they felt that what he said was true.

"But the message," said the girl, with a sudden recollection. "What can we do? The message for the Czar that you had to deliver!"

Something almost like a smile appeared on the face of the dying man, and they just heard his whispered answer:

"I gave it to the wolves."

◆

Plenty to Say.

Hilton—My wife is a matter-of-fact woman. She only speaks her mind.

Chilton—So does mine, but she changes her mind so often that it keeps her talking all the time.

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Our new SCIENTIFIC APPLIANCE employs Nature's own method of DEVELOPING and STRENGTHENING small or weak parts and restoring them to full VIGOR and POWER. No drugs or medicines required. Thousands have used our Developer with most MARVELOUS RESULTS. INFORMATION of INESTIMABLE VALUE FREE.
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THE CHICAGO LEDGER
THE SATURDAY BLADE

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GENTLEMEN—I would like to act as your Agent. Please send me Agent's Outfit with instructions and a bundle of papers. I take the Agency with the understanding that I am not to pay for unsold papers.
NAME ....
St., P. O. Box,
or R. F. D. ....
Town .... State ....
Cir—5.

FATE.

It had to be. We had to meet.
It is too late. You can't retreat.
You had to smile. I had to bow.
It was most strange you must allow.
You had to stop. I had to speak.
No explanation need we seek—
'Twas fate!

You had to nod. We had to walk.
You had to blush. I had to talk.
You had to hear. I had to tell.
'Tis thus the goddess weaves her spell.
And then, at last—it had to be.
'Tis very simple now to see—
'Twas fate!

We had to love unto the end.
A single path we have to wend.
You cannot go another way.
The scheme ordained you must obey;
We must conform with the design.
I must be yours. You must be mine.
'Tis fate!

TOO LATE!

BY MRS. E. BURKE COLLINS.

We had parted. There had been hasty words, bitter recriminations, followed by a scornful parting. It was all over. My life was ended, as far as love and happiness were concerned—those divine attributes for which the rebellious human heart will sigh. I, being a woman, must naturally feel the loss of all ties of affection, and, somehow, the world had suddenly grown very dark and cheerless to me.

I had been very happy when first I listened to "the old, old story" from the lips of Harold Winchester. He was my ideal—handsome, manly, noble; a man to look up to. There are really very few men in the world to whom a good woman can look up! My heart clung to its belief in his love, and yet—we were parted now.

I can hardly tell how our misunderstanding came about. Some trivial difference, followed by sharp words.

"It is the little rift within the lute
That by and by will make the music mute."

And he had gone—gone with my bitter words ringing in his ears.

"I will never forgive you," I had cried, in stormy anger—"never! never! You are unworthy of my love and trust."

"Trust!" he retorted scornfully. "Why should I trust to your assurance of affection, when you persist in receiving the attention of every fop in your circle of acquaintances?"

And so the secret was out. He was jealous—madly jealous, and without real cause. Was it right that I—young, and not altogether unattractive—should shut myself up like a dormouse in its cell, and receive no attention from others, simply because I was betrothed to Harold Winchester? My rebellious heart cried no!

I was wilful and childish, perhaps, but I shrank from the thought of the comments which would be rained upon my defenseless head from the tongues of the gossips in our set; for even refined, aristocratic society knows something of gossip and slander, and if I received no one kindly save my betrothed husband, there would certainly be room for remark.

But Harold was obtuse to all worldly reasoning. He refused to see the propriety in the attitude that I had assumed, and he strove against it, with the result already recorded

We had quarreled and parted, and I said to myself, with my heart beating in great, strangling throbs in my throat, that I hoped never to see him again. Ah, hasty words! I would give my life today to be able to recall them.

"To be wrath with one we love
Doth work like madness on the brain."

I determined that he should never know how severely I was suffering, though I perished in the effort to conceal the truth. I would cover up this wild, passionate love which surged through my heart, and go out into the world as usual. I would be gay and smiling, and no one would dare suspect the anguish which I was enduring.

So, that very night, I attended the opera with Captain Clarence and his mother. My home was in quaint old New Orleans, and the French opera house, quite a famous resort, was full to overflowing. Hardly were we seated in our box when, turning my lorgnette slowly, my gaze fell upon my recreant lover in an opposite box, occupied by a bevy of fair ladies and one or two society exquisites.

The indignant blood rushed in a hot, burning tide to my cheeks. This, then, was the way in which he was consoling himself. And it never occurred to me that my own conduct was open to the same construction. Even as I gazed I saw him arise and leave the box, perhaps he was coming to me. My heart gave a wild bound at the thought, for I loved him so that had he come back to me then and there I would have forgiven him for all his cruel words; nay, more, I would have promised anything, so that he would love me again as of old. There is nothing so terrible to a loving woman as the dreary, desolate, anguished thought that the heart which she prizes above all others is cold and unforgiving.

Well, I waited, with suspended breath, for my lover to enter our box; but, alas! he came not. In vain I watched for his coming, turning at length to my companion.

"Captain Clarence, what has become of Mr. Winchester?" I asked. "He was in that box opposite with Mrs. Overton's party, but he left just now."

"Miss Madison," returned the captain, with ill-concealed surprise, "you are mistaken. Mr. Winchester has left town. I saw him off on the train for Memphis not two hours ago.'

My heart sank. Then he had left the city directly after our quarrel, and my heart quivered with anguish at thought of what might be the consequences of our fatal misunderstanding. But I managed to conceal my anxiety, and tried to laugh and chat and be gay with the others, but all the while I was turning over and over in my bewildered brain the question which puzzled it. If I had not seen Harold Winchester in the Overtons' box, then, in Heaven's name, who—what was it?

The curtain descended at last, and Captain Clarence escorted his mother and myself out into the cool, crisp night to the carriage. A calm, starry night. The sky like dark-blue velvet, studded with shining diamonds. The crowd surged out upon the banquette. There was low, silvery laughter; sweet women voices were rehearsing the fine points of the opera; it had been "Faust," but I protest that I had not heard half of it. In the midst of it all, as I paused beside the curbing while the carriage drove up, I felt a light touch upon my shoulder, a touch which, though faint, compelled my attention. My heart bounded madly, for there at my side stood Harold Winchester, pale—oh, so pale and unutterably sad.

In an instant I forgot all; the memory of all quarrel and strife melted away into nothingness, in the light of a blissful reunion, and I cried out, in a joyous tone:

"Oh, Harold! you have come back, and I am so glad!"

Captain Clarence laid his gloved hand gently upon my arm.

"Miss Madison!" he cried, in a tone of wondering surprise, "what is the matter? To whom are you speaking? Don't you see there is no one there?"

"I was speaking to Mr. Winchester," I replied eagerly. "He was here a moment ago"—I glanced around in confusion—"but he's gone now."

I was placed in the carriage and was driven homeward, my mind in a strange tumult. I was positive—reader, I am positive still—that I had seen Harold Winchester twice that night; if not he, then, in Heaven's name, how account for the delusion? Had I gone suddenly mad? I felt very like it, I can assure you, as I bade my friends good night, and, entering my home, went straight upstairs to my own chamber.

The curtains were drawn snugly; a bright fire burned like a red unwinking eye in the grate; the lighted lamp stared at me; my slippers and easy chair awaited me, and something else—a telegram!

Trembling with nervous haste, I tore it open and glanced over it, while slowly its terse sentences broke my heart as with a fearful blow:

"Miss Madison: An accident occurred at five p. m. on the St. Louis and Chicago Railroad fifty miles, above New Orleans. Harold Winchester killed instantly.

"S. MOODY, M. D."

I would have died to bring him back, but it was too late.

Railroading Down South.

A New Yorker who had just returned from the South records his experiences and observations. He was most strikingly impressed by the vagaries of the Southern railroads, and he offers this illustration: When he arrived at the station he was much surprised to find that the 11:15 started promptly on time. "Well," said he to the conductor, "they libel you up North, where they say your trains are never on time, either coming or going."

"The Northerners are right," was the unexpected response of the conductor. "We never got a train off in time in our lives."

"Why, this train got off on time. It's the 11:15, isn't it?"

"Yes, my friend, it's the 11:15, but it's last Tuesday's 11:15. Today's 11:15 won't start much befo' Monday, I reckon."

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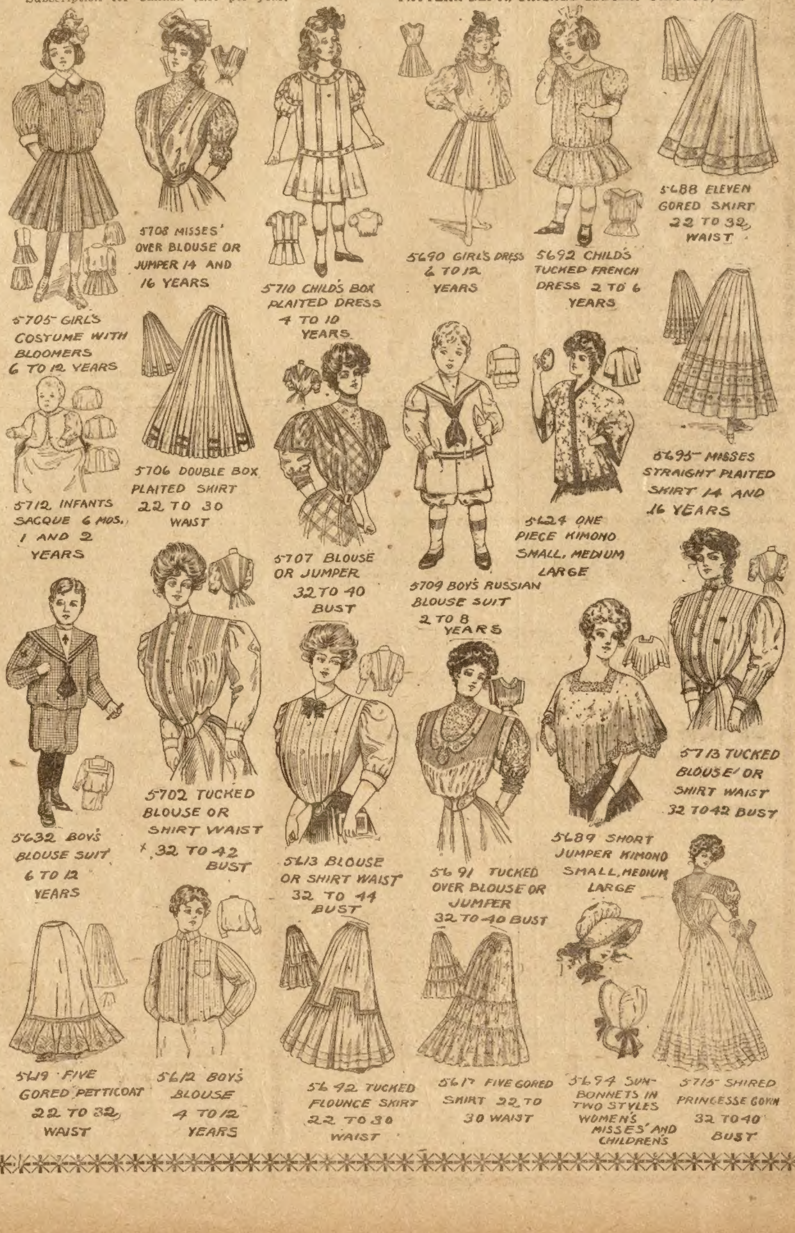
5705 GIRL'S COSTUME WITH BLOOMERS 6 TO 12 YEARS
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5712 INFANTS SACQUE 6 MOS. 1 AND 2 YEARS
5706 DOUBLE BOX PLAITED SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5707 BLOUSE OR JUMPER 32 TO 40 BUST
5709 BOY'S RUSSIAN BLOUSE SUIT 2 TO 8 YEARS
5624 ONE PIECE KIMONO SMALL, MEDIUM LARGE
5695 MISSES STRAIGHT PLAITED SKIRT 14 AND 16 YEARS
5632 BOY'S BLOUSE SUIT 6 TO 12 YEARS
5702 TUCKED BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 42 BUST
5613 BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 44 BUST
5691 TUCKED OVER BLOUSE OR JUMPER 32 TO 40 BUST
5689 SHORT JUMPER KIMONO SMALL, MEDIUM LARGE
5713 TUCKED BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 42 BUST
5619 FIVE GORED PETTICOAT 22 TO 32 WAIST
5612 BOY'S BLOUSE 4 TO 12 YEARS
5642 TUCKED FLOUNCE SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5617 FIVE GORED SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5694 SUN-BONNETS IN TWO STYLES WOMEN'S, MISSES' AND CHILDREN'S
5715 SHIRED PRINCESSE GOWN 32 TO 40 BUST

FOR

YOUTHFUL EYES

ANIMAL CURIOS.

Storks devour kittens.

The horse has no eyebrows.

Fish never chew their food.

Turtles and tortoises have no teeth.

The sheep's upper jaw is toothless.

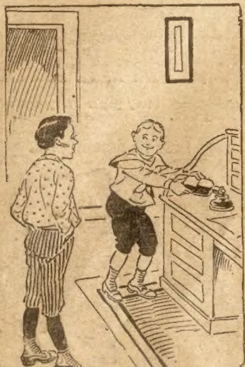
A well-grown kangaroo can leap sixty feet.

All cud-chewing animals have cloven hoofs.

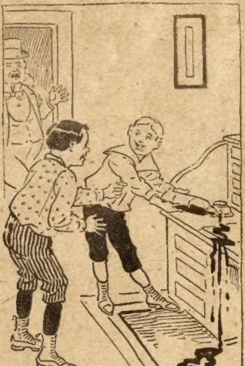
Hares and snakes sleep with their eyes open.

The frog can only breathe with its mouth closed.

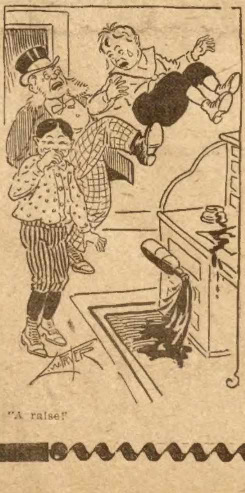
DEMONSTRATED.



Tommy (to the new boy)—The boss likes me because I'm so neat.



"You want to keep your mind on your work in this office if you expect to get—



"A raise!"

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THE LITTLE VOYAGER.

Oh, the ways are many to Drowsy Land.
Some one, I know, would try them all.
'Tis hey, tonight for a big balloon,
Big and round, like a silver ball,
Up through the dark, it swings along,
Blown by the night wind's rustling song.

Slowly it sways and swings this way,
Poising at last, just overhead,
When down drops a glimmering rope of light,
And anchors it safe to a tiny bed:
And climbing down the ladder of silver beams,
Some one embarks for the land of dreams.

All through the night, in the shining thing,
Silent they float through the cool, sweet dark,
Reeds they dip in the foamy clouds,
Where the summer lightnings glint and spark,
And east and west, o'er the wind-swept sky,
The twinkling, golden bubbles fly.

Do you ask me how Some One comes home again?
When deep in the west dips the silver sphere?
Oh, never a thought do I give to that,
Perhaps the sun is the charioteer.
I only know that the tiny bed
Pillows each morning a golden head.

How He Painted the Name.

They tell a good joke on a Maine captain of a little coasting vessel. The vessel was lying in port, and the captain decided to show the old "salts" about there how the name should be painted on a boat. He was fully able to pay a painter to do the job, but he was stingy, and, moreover, he wanted to let people see how rapidly he could "turn his hand to anything." So he dropped a float overboard, but finding that he could not reach high enough on the bows to do the painting from that standpoint, he went on deck and leaned over the side to do the work. The name that he desired to put on was MAGGIE, and having finished the lettering, he went on shore to take a look at his work. To his amazement he saw it thus:

MAGGIE.

Of course you understand how he made the blunder.

The Lobster's Shell.

Perhaps you have heard of the young housekeeper that refused to buy some lobsters in the market because they were not red. When the dealer told her that they were just out of the water, she said that might be true, but it was the red kind she wanted. It should not be necessary to point out the joke to the boys and girls, for they know, of course, that the red color of the lobster is produced by boiling; but do they know why it turns red? If they will notice the shell of a fresh lobster closely, they will see that it shows the mingling of two pigments, red and blue. Now when the lobster is plunged into hot water, the blue pigment fades out, and the red remains. That is the whole story.

Words Ending in O.

The best spellers among the boys and girls may be pardoned if they are sometimes in doubt whether to add es or simply s, when pluralizing a noun ending in o. There is a simple rule that governs such cases, however, and if they would remember that, the doubt would be removed. English nouns ending in o preceded by a consonant take es in the plural, but those ending in o preceded by a vowel take s only. Echo, motto and potato will serve as examples of the first, the plurals of which are echoes, mottoes and potatoes. Folio and cameo are examples of the second, the plurals of which are folios and cameos. The words solo, junto and canto, and a few others, have not been fully anglicized, and they take s only in the plural. Another exception is the word two, which is usually pluralized as twos, though some authorities prefer twoes.

Pride Goeth Before a Fall.

Willie was so devoted to his mother that he could not bear to have any one else do things for him, not even his indulgent father. He always wanted his mother, and as he was an only child it was permitted; but one night he cried out:

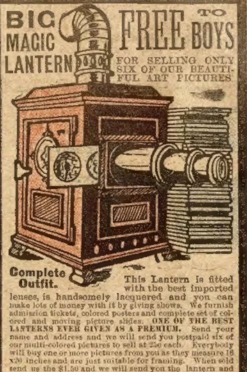
"Papa, will you please bring me a drink of water?"

His father went, proud of the unusual summons, and when the child had taken his drink, asked him: "But why did you call me tonight, instead of your mother?"

"O, there's been a dressmaker here today, and I was afraid there might be some pins or needles on the floor to get into mamma's feet," said the child, innocently.

A Freak of Lightning.

A strange freak of lightning is reported from a town in New York. It found its way into the butler's pantry of a certain residence, on a shelf of which were some brilliantly decorated royal Dresden plates. The lightning made a slight discoloration about the edge of several of the plates, but on the wall it made several photographs of them, with the decorations reproduced, colors and all. Here, in an instant, the electric fluid did what men have been trying in vain to do, for many years—it took a photograph in colors.



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Good Little Girl.

Among our neighbors is a family of bright, interesting, but exceedingly lively youngsters, and as is always the case in such families the mother has frequent cause to reprimand them. On such occasions she often points out the good behavior of a certain little playmate as a good example. One day, when correcting them for some mischief, she said: "Now, Margaret would not do a thing like that, would she?"

"No, 'course she wouldn't," said Jack, a bright little tot of 4, "'cause Margaret is a good little girl. She's 'bout the best little girl I know; but why wouldn't she be? Her father's a doctor, and a' course he'd keep the best one for himself."

A Wig for the Baby.

It is the misfortune of some babies to be born with a head in the same condition that "old Uncle Ned's" was. The boys and girls all remember the song:

'He had no hair on the top of his head,
The place where the hair ought to grow."

In a family that the editor knows of there is a baby of that kind. One day, recently, the baby's brother Harry said to his father that as the "kid" would be a month old the next day, it might be a good idea to give it a present.

"I think so, too, Harry; what shall it be?"

"Let's buy him a wig," said Harry; "he needs that more 'n anything."